

INTRODUCTION

The Plan of Development for the Town of Darien has proven to be an effective tool. Major policy decisions such as those made relative to permitting Executive and Administrative Offices in 1967 or multi-family housing in 1984 have resulted in nearly every potential square foot being developed. Other larger municipal projects such as the establishment of a municipal parking program for the downtown have come to fruition. In fact, a review of the previously adopted plans will indicate that the vast majority of the specified projects have been carried out. The Town has made several land acquisitions in accordance with the Plan and a multitude of municipal projects have been implemented ranging from a new Town Hall to a new synchronized traffic signal system.

The 1995 Town Plan is intended to once again assess the condition of Darien and determine the objectives and policy guidelines for the next decade. There is constant change involved in addressing these needs. Consider that the 1967 Plan was concerned with a growing population and school expansion programs while the 1984 program related to a declining population and the closing of several schools. Now, approximately ten years later, the Town is again faced with a growing student population and school expansion needs. Other factors such as economic conditions and specific land use demands are also in a constant state of change and must be fully addressed in assessing Darien's future. For example, in the late 1970's there was so much demand for corporate office space that the townspeople were concerned that this use would change the Town's character. Now, a substantial amount of this space is vacant and alternative office uses are being sought.

It is important to recognize that, by itself, the Plan will accomplish nothing. It is similar to a road map - it must be followed carefully and intelligently in order to reach the desired objectives. The character of Darien's future development will actually be the composite result of actions not only by the Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Environmental Protection Commission and Architectural Review Board, but also by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Representative Town Meeting, other Town agencies and officials, the Board of Education, State and Federal agencies, as well as those actions of private individuals and organizations. To the extent that these activities work cooperatively, following the recommendations of the Town Plan, the most desirable development of Darien as now foreseen can take place.

The fundamental goal has been, and continues to be, the preservation and enhancement of an attractive suburban living environment, but within those broad parameters are numerous factors which must be dealt with to best assure achieving that goal. This Plan is the Town's most recent attempt to accomplish this goal.

Since the establishment of the Darien Planning and Zoning Commission in 1926, the Town has placed great importance on sound town planning. The 1954, 1967 and 1984 Town Plans of Development have served this community well. The 1995 Town Plan of Development owes much to these prior Town plans.

BASIC STUDIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE BASIC STUDIES

Existing Land Use

- Less than five percent of Darien's 7,900 acre land base is vacant and not all of that vacant land is actually developable.
- There are approximately 150 approved or possibly developable building lots currently available in Town.
- Extensive residential development will continue to involve additions to the diverse existing stock of single family residential development.
- All of the multi-family sites identified in the 1984 Town Plan within the DBR Zone have been developed - 220 units on approximately 29 acres total. Additional multi-family sites within the DBR Zone will most likely require the consolidation of parcels. There is also a development potential of approximately 150 units within the DMR Zone established in 1992.
- Commercial acreage and development patterns have remained relatively stable since 1984- involving approximately 5% of the land base.
- Since 1984 the Town has added 47.69 acres to its open space by either acquisition, dedication or conservation easement.
- A total of 529 acres of the Town's current open space is in the form of private recreational clubs, including three country clubs.
- The intensification of existing development or the complete redevelopment of areas will be a key issue of this next planning period.

Population

- The 1990 Census figure for Darien's population was 18,196, a decline of 696 persons from 1980 but not nearly as dramatic a decline as predicted by the State Office of Policy and Management to a level of 17,300.
- Significant population growth is occurring in the 0-4 age bracket and the 25-44 brackets. The 65 and over bracket also continues to increase as a share of Darien's population.
- There is significant capacity within the existing residential units in Darien to accommodate additional population growth in terms of family or household size. A

return, for example to the 1960 average family size of 3.6, would result in a 33% increase in the Town's population.

- Census data leaves no question that Darien's people are well educated, affluent and mobile.
- 14,252 Darien residents are involved in the work force. A total of 3,998 of these residents use Metro North to commute to New York City.
- Despite its decline in population, Darien continues to be the third most densely populated community in the region.

Housing

- The total number of housing units has increased from 6,340 in 1980 to 6,657 in 1990.
- Over 86 percent of the Town's housing stock have three bedrooms or more and over 37 percent have four or more.
- The median sales price of all Darien housing in 1990 was \$388,750 and the mean sales price was \$470,385.
- The median sales price of a condominium in 1990 within Darien was \$235,000, meeting an intended objective to provide some more affordable housing. Since 1984, 220 multi-family units were constructed in the DBR Zone, including 30 senior housing units and 32 moderate income units. Darien now has as total of 115 units of affordable or publicly assisted housing.
- Out of Darien's 6,404 occupied housing units, over three-quarters have two or more registered vehicles.

Environmental Features

- As the Town is already substantially developed, most major environmental and open space decisions have already been made. Environmental planning is now primarily on a site by site basis.
- Darien's 16.5 mile long shoreline on Long Island Sound is one of the finest natural shorelines remaining in western Connecticut.
- The Municipal Coastal Program adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 1984 is incorporated into this Plan.
- More than 17,000 feet of Darien's shoreline has been permanently protected and additional areas still need to be protected by conservation easements, open space declarations or other similar means.

- Inland and tidal wetlands serve multiple functions of wildlife habitat, storage and cleansing of storm water, erosion control and aquifer recharge areas.
- A number of aquifers of different volume capacity are located in Darien, including a major and relatively undisturbed aquifer in the area generally underlying the Wee Burn Country Club.
- Darien's environmental protection requirements are continually increasing. The Town has never had a professionally-trained environmental technician on its staff but rather, personnel from the Planning and Zoning Department have filled in. However, the growing complexities of environmental issues require that a trained environmentalist be added to the staff.

Streets and Traffic Circulation

- Virtually all of the major arteries in Darien are State highways. Excluding I-95, the Boston Post Road carries the heaviest daily flows in the Town, ranging from 11,300 vehicles per day to 20,000 between the railroad overpass and Mansfield Avenue. Hoyt Street has experienced the largest increase in traffic and carries the next heaviest magnitude as volumes approach 13,000 vehicles daily near the New Canaan Town Line and about 11,000 near the Middlesex/Christie Hill Road intersection.
- In 1992, I-95 between interchanges #9 and #10 carried 124,000 vehicles daily.
- Traffic volume in the Town has increased about 30-60 percent between the 1980 and 1992-94 study periods. Middlesex Road and Noroton Avenue have in particular experienced significant traffic increases.
- The highest accident location in Darien between 1991 and 1993 was on the Boston Post Road at Mansfield Avenue with a total of 28.
- The two most critical intersections relative to Levels of Service, are Hoyt Street at Middlesex/Christie Hill and Hoyt Street at Woodway Road. Mansfield Avenue is also approaching its capacity limits.
- There are a number of locations where safety and/or capacity improvements should be considered. In many instances, the limited amount of available public right-of-way will preclude physical widening of the roadway - at least in the short term. In other instances, safety improvements will require the cooperation of adjacent property owners.

Fiscal Conditions

- The current fiscal condition of Darien is excellent but the future financial outlook is not as positive on balance. Growth in the Grand List is dropping, commercial values are dropping and there has been a decline in intergovernmental revenues available to Darien.
- The school population which hit a peak of 5,156 in 1963, and then dropped to 2,643 in 1989, has now started to climb again and is projected by the Board of Education to reach 5,000 pupils by the year 2003/4.

Consequently, major costs will be involved as additional facilities will have to be added at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

- Other significant costs likely to continue to be incurred by the Town include: costs of waste removal; improvements to Darien's downtown; adequate public safety; open space acquisition; and upgrading of the Town's infrastructure, such as improvements to the Town's storm drainage, sewer and sidewalks among other elements.

The Regional Context

- Darien is very much a part of the regional picture including Long Island Sound, the railroad, Interstate-95 and the Boston Post Road.
- The Town is also the home of a State emissions testing facility, a major DOT maintenance garage and two Interstate service facilities.
- Darien has been an active supporter of the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) since its inception and also is a member of the CRRA, the regional resource recovery facility located in Bridgeport.
- The first Regional Plan was adopted by SWRPA in 1974 and it is currently being updated. The policies and objectives of the 1995 SWRPA Regional plan are based on a recognition of the distinct identities and different functions of the municipalities of the Region, as well as their common features and goals. Darien's local planning policies are in conformance with SWRPA's Regional Plan.
- The State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management has recently circulated a proposed revision to the State Conservation and Development Plan providing policies, priorities and guidelines to ensure that State actions are directed toward the achievement of long range goals.

EXISTING LAND USE

The use of a community's land base is always a key factor in preparing a Town Plan. This has become particularly important to Darien in the sense that this town is becoming a fully "mature" community, being more than 95 percent developed. This is up from the 90 percent level determined in 1984. However, an analysis of the Town's vacant land areas indicates that this land is now comprised of a much higher percentage of land in the "unlikely for development" or "environmentally sensitive" categories. Consequently, potentials for establishing or expanding new uses are becoming substantially limited. The current vacant land status compares with the determinations made in 1951 when 56 percent of the land was still vacant or 1967 when 33 percent was still undeveloped.

In the present situation, there are approximately 150 approved or possibly developable building lots currently available in the Town. In addition, it should be noted that approximately 27 percent of the total amount of vacant land remaining is included in three properties. These are the properties known as the D'Addario property on Hollow Tree Ridge Road, portions of the Ziegler Estate on Long Neck Point Road and the property north of Wakemore Street and east of Hoyt Street known as the Procaccini property.

The Town of Darien is comprised of 13.4 square miles or 8,576 acres when the area including Long Island Sound is considered. However, the Town's land base actually contains 12.3 square miles or 7,900.7 acres. It is the latter area that has been used, and will be used, for Town planning purposes. In terms of the specific uses of Darien's land base, the patterns

have become quite stable and there have been no major changes between the patterns documented as part of the 1984 Town Plan effort and the current time, with the exception of the addition of multi-family housing in the Designed Business and Residential (DBR) Zone. In 1984, a major policy change was made to permit multi-family housing in this centrally located zone. Since then, nearly every site identified as being potentially available for this use has been developed. This involves a total of 190 units of multi-family housing constructed on six sites and encompassing a total of approximately 29 acres. The Town has also purchased 2.2 acres in the DBR Zone and constructed 30 moderate income units.

In addition, the Planning and Zoning Commission has rezoned the area bounded by the railroad, Hollow Tree Ridge Road, the Turnpike and the Noroton River as the Designed Multi-Family Residential (DMR) Zone. This district includes approximately 50 acres and is currently completely undeveloped. It has the potential for an additional 150 plus multi-family units.

In contrast to the significant changes in commercial zoning regulations and use areas that occurred between 1967 and 1984, the commercial acreage and development patterns have remained relatively stable since 1984. The amount of Darien's land base that is zoned for commercial purposes remains at approximately 5 percent or a little over 390 acres. Table 1., set forth on the following page, indicates the acreage in each of the zoning districts in the Town.

The Town, through various means, continues to add to its permanent open space. The opportunities for establishing additional permanent open space are limited by virtue of the Town's developed status. However, the amount of open space acreage continues to grow, has grown consistently over the past three decades, and should be increased. Since the preparation of the last Plan in 1984 another 47.69 acres of permanent open space have been added by acquisition, dedication and conservation easements. The most common use of land not committed to a residential use in Darien is for private open space used for recreational purposes such as country clubs and swimming clubs. Of the 529 acres in this category, 489 acres or 92% are contained in four parcels within the R-2 residential district. The remaining private recreational acreage is in three other residential zoning districts. These properties create a very strong open space imprint in the neighborhoods in which they are located. It becomes extremely important, therefore, to investigate methods available to the Town to ensure the preservation of these significant open spaces and to put such mechanisms in place should they be needed at some point in the future. In the chapter on "Open Space and Recreation", of this Plan, several potential mechanisms are described. Although there is such extensive private recreation in the R-2 district, it is important to note that there is no land used for public park or recreation in this largest lot residential zone.

TABLE 1.
AREA BY ZONING DISTRICT

	<u>ZONING DISTRICT</u>	<u>AREA IN ACRES</u>	<u>PERCENT OF TOTAL</u>
R-2	One Family Residential Zone -2 Acres	2291.3	29.0%
R-1	One Family Residential Zone - 1 Acre	2650.6	33.6%
R-1/2	One Family Residential Zone - 1/2 Acre	1176.9	14.9%
R-1/3	One Family Residential Zone - 1/3 Acre	1100.3	13.9%
R-1/5	One Family Residential Zone - 1/5 Acre	<u>239.7</u>	<u>3.0%</u>
Total Residential Districts		7458.8	94.40%
DBR	Designed Business and Residential Zone (Overlay)*	(74.6)*	(0.9)*%
DMR	Designed Multi-Family Residential	(49.6)*	(0.60)*%
Total Multi-Family Residential		124.2*	1.50%*
PR	Parking - Residential Zone	37.2	0.50%
DOR-5	Designed Office and Research Zone - 5 Acre Zone	57.9	0.70%
DOR-1	Designed Office and Research Zone - 1 Acre Zone	16.7	0.20%
NB	Neighborhood Business Zone	5.8	0.10%
OB	Office Business Zone	32.0	0.40%
DB-1	Designed Business-1	38.6	0.50%
DB-2	Designed Business-2	29.0	0.40%
DC	Designed Commercial Zone	39.2	0.50%
PB	Planned Retail Business Zone	4.1	0.10%
CBD	Central Business District Zone	41.3	0.50%
SB	Service Business Zone	57.0	0.70%
SB-E	Service Business East	<u>33.5</u>	<u>0.40%</u>
Total Non-Residential Districts		<u>441.9</u>	<u>5.60%</u>
GRAND TOTAL		7900.7	100%

* Included in total for underlying zoning district.

Source: Town of Darien Zoning Map in effect on January 4, 1994.

The amount and pattern of Darien's land utilized under the transportation facilities category has not increased or changed significantly since 1967. These patterns have been pretty well established and the most likely scenario is that they will continue to remain relatively unchanged. A potential exception to this would involve any major changes to Interstate 95, the Connecticut Turnpike. Preliminary proposals recently done by the State Department of Transportation have indicated that any major changes to this highway would have a profound effect upon the Town of Darien.

It is anticipated that Darien will continue to be a dynamic community and will continue to experience development pressures and proposals for change. Given the substantially high development level in the Town, it must be anticipated that many of these proposals will involve the intensification of existing development or the complete redevelopment of areas. Land assemblage, pressure for rezoning and other such measures are most likely in Darien's immediate future. Consequently, it is important that Darien prepare in advance for the directions it would like to take and set forth these directions in a very clear manner and in sufficient detail. It is the intent of this Plan to provide this direction for the Town.

POPULATION

In 1980, Darien experienced its first loss in population in recent history. This loss (1970 to 1980) of 7% is not completely accurate because a large portion is attributable to a change in census-taking methods starting in 1980 under which the 18-21 year old group is counted at their college town rather than at their parents' home as was previously done. This change in census method means the 1970 figure is comparably too high by close to 1000 people. Prior years are too high for the same reason. The 1990 census disclosed a further loss from 18,892 in 1980 to 18,196. Table 2. below shows the changes in Darien's population between the years 1880 and 1990. The recent losses can be attributed to smaller household sizes rather than a reduction in the number of dwelling units or any other factor. The number of persons per household in 1980 was 3.04 versus a 1990 count of 2.82 persons per household. The number of persons per family declined from 3.31 in 1980 to 3.14 in 1990. However, Darien's decline in population was not nearly as dramatic as projected by the State Office of Policy and Management (OPM). This agency projected that Darien's population would be 17,300 in the year 1990 and would continue to decline to a level of 14,050 in the year 2010. This again would be attributed to the projected number of persons per household which OPM estimated would be reduced from 2.42 persons per household in 1990 to a projected 1.78 persons in the year 2010. In view of the continued growth in number of dwelling units, and the continued growth of capacity in existing dwelling units, it is difficult to accept the OPM projections as anywhere near correct. This demonstrates the difficulty of making future estimates by projecting current trends into the future.

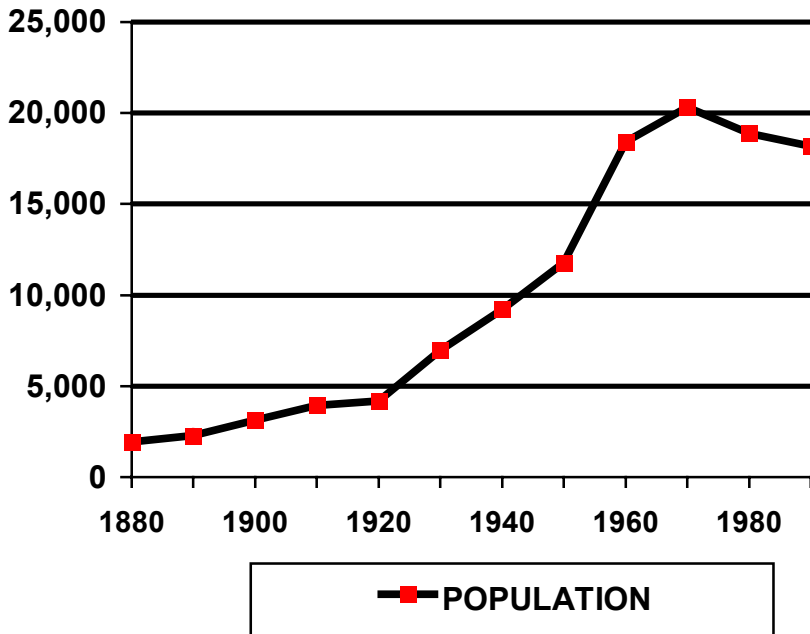
**TABLE 2.
DARIEN POPULATION 1880-1990**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	POPULATION CHANGE BY:	
		<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1880	1,949	-	-
1890	2,276	327	16.8%
1900	3,116	840	36.9%
1910	3,946	830	26.6%
1920	4,184	238	6.0%
1930	6,951	2,767	66.1%
1940	9,222	2,271	32.7%
1950	11,767	2,545	27.6%
1960	18,437	6,670	56.7%
1970	20,336	1,899	10.3%
1980*	18,892	-1,444	-7.1%
1990	18,196	-696	-3.7%

* Change in procedures, e.g. students and military personnel counted as part of school or base in lieu of home.

Source: U.S. Census of Population

FIGURE 1.
DARIEN POPULATION, 1880-1990



The age-sex distribution data set forth below as Figure 2 and Table 3 illustrates the changes in population composition. Not surprisingly, Darien's younger population in the 0 to 4 years of age bracket has increased quite dramatically. Personal observations within the Town, as well as recent experiences of the Board of Education, would indicate this fact even without access to this census data. In addition, it should be noted that the growth in the age categories 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 have also increased quite significantly. Of course, this is all related in the sense that younger families are moving into some of the previously older aged neighborhoods, accounting for less of a decline in population. The median age, however, has increased from 36.9 in 1980 to 38.2. Factors influencing this are the increases in the 65 and over categories and the substantial losses in the 10-19 years of age categories.

**FIGURE 2
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION
YEAR (TOTAL POPULATION)**

SOURCE: SWRPA Data Memo #4, June 1983 and #91-21, July, 1991

**TABLE 3.
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION**

	1980				1990			
	NUMBER		PERCENT		NUMBER		PERCENT	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-4	388	456	2.1%	2.4%	738	675	4.1%	3.7%
5-9	692	611	3.7%	3.2%	622	587	3.4%	3.2%
10-14	1016	912	5.4%	4.8%	531	568	2.9%	3.1%
15-19	958	897	5.1%	4.7%	559	531	3.1%	2.9%
20-24	511	485	2.7%	2.6%	427	494	2.3%	2.7%
25-29	394	391	2.1%	2.1%	490	501	2.7%	2.8%
30-34	517	644	2.7%	3.4%	640	753	3.5%	4.1%
35-39	723	840	3.8%	4.4%	740	798	4.1%	4.4%
40-44	656	725	3.5%	3.8%	738	809	4.1%	4.4%
45-49	629	687	3.3%	3.6%	765	779	4.2%	4.3%
50-54	704	713	3.7%	3.8%	573	548	3.1%	3.0%
55-59	645	642	3.4%	3.4%	459	522	2.5%	2.9%
60-64	486	524	2.6%	2.8%	498	489	2.7%	2.7%
65-69	350	378	1.9%	2.0%	384	421	2.1%	2.3%
70-74	232	307	1.2%	1.6%	275	340	1.5%	1.9%
75+	<u>258</u>	<u>521</u>	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>2.8%</u>	<u>341</u>	<u>601</u>	<u>1.9%</u>	<u>3.3%</u>
TOTAL	9,159	9,733	48.5%	51.5%	8,780	9,416	48.3%	51.7%
TOTAL								
POPULATION:	18,892				18,196			

Source: SWRPA Data Memo #91-21

The Town's five census tracts are shown on Figure 3. Table 4 sets forth the populations within these census tracts and compares the changes among the last three census counts. The only growth area between 1980 and 1990 is a minor increase in tract 302, which can be attributed to the development of condominiums in this area during the mid to late 1980's. While tracts 304 and 305 continue to decline, the decreases are significantly less in 1990 than 1980. This reflects the establishment of younger family households in many of these neighborhoods.

**FIGURE 3
CENSUS TRACTS**

**TABLE 4.
POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACTS**

CENSUS TRACT	1970-1980			1980-1990	
	1970	1980	% CHANGE	1990	% CHANGE
301	2,992	3,094	3.4%	2,983	-3.6%
302	3,239	2,992	-7.6%	2,994	0.1%
303	4,278	3,962	-7.4%	3,859	-2.6%
304	3,785	3,315	-12.4%	3,177	-4.2%
305	6,042	5,190	-14.1%	5,022	-3.2%
Subtotal	20,336	18,553	-8.8%	18,035	-2.8%
Group Quarters	0	121	----	161	33.1%
TOTAL	20,336	18,674	-8.2%	18,196	-2.6%

Source: South Western Region Planning Agency, 1990 U.S. Census Data

Table 5 below describes the changes in household size between 1970 and 1990. All five census tracts have experienced decreasing counts, but again the decreases are significantly less in 1990 than in 1980. The exception is in census tract 302, which can also be attributed to the amount of condominium development in this area between 1980 and 1990 and the smaller household population generally attributed with condominiums.

**TABLE 5.
POPULATION PER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNIT**

CENSUS TRACT	1970-1980			1980-1990	
	1970	1980	% CHANGE	1990	% CHANGE
301	3.45	3.21	-7.0%	3.04	-5.3%
302	3.24	3.14	-3.1%	2.87	-8.6%
303	3.32	2.92	-12.0%	2.79	-4.5%
304	3.29	3.00	-8.8%	2.71	-9.7%
305	3.42	2.98	-12.9%	2.85	-4.4%
TOTAL	3.35	3.04	-9.3%	2.85	-6.3%

Source: South Western Region Planning Agency, 1990 U.S. Census Data

It must be considered that while Darien has extremely limited land left for new residential development, and there are no known proposals for major changes in zoning policies, over 86 percent of the Town's housing stock have three bedrooms or more and over 37 percent have four or more bedrooms. Consequently, there is capacity within the existing residential units in Darien to accommodate additional population growth in terms of family or household size. For example, consider that this community's population was 18,437 in 1960 with a total of 5,263 housing units at that time compared to the 1990 population of 18,196 residing in 6,657 units. The highest population counted in the census was 20,336 in 1970.

Darien's people are well educated, affluent, and mobile. A total of 93.7 percent of its population have at least a high school diploma and 59.3 percent have a college degree. The per capita income in 1989 equaled \$51,795. Darien households had a median income in the same year of \$89,395 with the median family income being \$101,583. It was also established during that data year that 26.5 percent of the households in Darien earned an income of \$150,000 or more. The distinction between household and family is a household includes all persons who occupy a housing unit and a family consists of a householder and one or more other persons related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption.

In terms of mobility, of the 16,801 persons over 5 years of age within the Town, 10,706 lived in their present house in 1985. More than a third of the Town's population counted in 1990 had moved into the community during that five year period. Out of this total of 6,095 persons, 2,835 moved into Darien from elsewhere in Fairfield County and a comparable 2,623 persons moved in from a different state. Only 1,115 persons within the Town have lived in their present house since 1969 or earlier.

The labor force statistics correlate with the education, affluence, and mobility factors which strongly influence Darien and its people. Out of a total number of 14,252 persons 16 years of age or older, 9,393 were involved in the local labor force. While the changes in this total number of persons between 1980 and 1990 were not that dramatic, going from 9,155 to 9,393, it is interesting to note this 2.6 percent change, involved a 9.6 percent increase in the number of females in the labor force and a 1.8 percent decrease in the number of males. Not surprisingly, 2,888 of the employed persons, or 31 percent, were in the category of executive, administrative and managerial work with 1,910 involved in the finance, insurance or real estate industries.

Out of the total number of people who work in, only 14.5 percent lived and worked within Darien in 1985. Existing projections indicate that this number will fall to 13 percent by the year 2000. Of the 8,953 persons who commuted to other communities, 61 percent drove alone, which was the lowest percentage in the region, and a total of 22.7 percent of the work force used public transportation. Much of this involves use of the Metro North railroad to commute to New York City. A total of 3,998 people commuted from Darien into New York. In contrast, though, in the neighboring community of Norwalk to the east, a total of 75.8 percent of the work force drove alone to work and Norwalk had the lowest use of public transportation at a level of 8 percent.

Despite its decline in population, Darien continues to be the third most densely populated community within the southwestern regional planning area. Table 6. below shows a comparison of Darien with the other communities in the South Western Region between the years 1980 and 1990.

In summary then, the changes taking place in Darien's population will dramatically influence the recommendations of this updated Town Plan. Younger families in particular, will establish new requirements for schools, recreational facilities, library services and other community services.

TABLE 6.
POPULATION DENSITY
DARIEN AND SWRPA PLANNING REGION
1980 to 1990

	TOTAL AREA (<u>SQUARE</u> <u>MILES</u>)	PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE:	
		<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>
Darien	12.85	1470.2	1415.9
Greenwich	47.86	1244.8	1221.2
New Canaan	22.12	810.6	807.4
Norwalk	22.80	3410.8	3435.8
Stamford	37.71	2716.9	2865.4
Weston	19.79	418.6	436.9
Westport	20.00	1264.5	1220.3
Wilton	26.95	569.6	593.5
TOTAL SWRPA AREA	210.08	1500.0	1570.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population and SWRPA

HOUSING

Darien continues to be considered one of the most desirable residential communities within the country. The Town's attractive residential areas are its greatest assets, preserved and enhanced largely as a matter of deliberate community policy. The Town has long maintained its prime objective to enhance its residential character and preserve the single-family nature of the community. More than a third of Darien's homes were constructed before 1939.

Despite a decline in its total population, Darien's housing units continue to increase in number from a total of 6,340 in 1980 to 6,657 units in 1990. Approximately half of this increase can be attributed to the change in housing policy that was made as part of the last update of the Town's Plan of Development. This involved the development and adoption of regulations permitting multi-family housing within the Design Business and Residential (DBR) Zone and the identification of specific sites within the DBR Zone appropriate for such development. This was the first time in the Town's history that multi-family housing was specifically permitted and encouraged. Table 7 below sets forth the multi-family developments which have been constructed since 1984.

**TABLE 7.
NEW DBR MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING**

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF UNITS</u>	<u>SITE ACREAGE</u>
Old Town Hall <i>Academy St.</i> (moderate income senior housing)	30	2.5
Pine Brook <i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	20	5.2
Middlesex Commons <i>Hale Lane</i>	60	10.5
Villager Pond <i>Boston Post Rd.</i>	37	4.43
Sedgwick Village <i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	22	3.2
Darien Close <i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	21	2.7
Clock Hill Homes <i>Gideon Lane</i> (moderate-income)	30	2.2
TOTAL	220	30.73

Darien's dwellings are substantial with some 86 percent of them having 3 bedrooms or more. A total of 2,469 units of the total have 4 bedrooms or more. Recent experience has indicated that many of the homeowners are further increasing the size of the existing housing, in many cases significantly, through additions and alterations. More than 1,500 Building Permits for additions and alterations have been issued in the past five years, involving estimated construction costs of \$67,500,000.

As stated, the location of Darien, the desirability of the community and its education system, the size of the housing stock and other factors all contribute to high costs. Darien has the fourth most expensive housing within the South Western Region. The median sales price of all Darien housing in 1990 was \$388,750 and the mean sales price was \$470,385. The Town of New Canaan to the north was the most expensive with a median sales price of \$480,000 and a mean sales price of \$578,382. New Canaan was followed by Greenwich and Weston

respectively. The median sales price of a condominium in 1990 within Darien was \$235,000, being certainly the most affordable of any new housing within the community. An attempt to achieve some level of affordability was one of the primary objectives of the establishment of the DBR multi-family regulations. While these costs are still relative, it can be stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission's objective was achieved as generally designed.

A total of 81.5 percent of all of the existing occupied housing units within the Town are valued at \$300,000 or more. It is also notable that the median sales price of all of the existing single-family housing in Darien was \$410,000 in 1990. New single-family homes have a median sales price of \$1,015,000. This extraordinary price of new housing construction is exceeded only by the Town of New Canaan which has a median sales price for new housing at a level of \$1,365,000.

At the present time, Darien has a total of 115 publicly assisted housing units. Thirty units of moderate-income housing for the elderly were constructed at the "Old Town Hall" site in 1985. In addition, there are 53 units of subsidized housing at the Allen-O'Neill development in Noroton Heights, one (1) CHFA mortgage within the community and two moderate income units at the Villager Pond condominium complex, and 30 units of moderate income housing, on land purchased by the Town, known as Clock Hill Homes, was completed in 1995.

Over three-quarters of Darien's 6,404 occupied housing units involve two or more registered vehicles. Each of 3,116 units has two or more cars or vehicles associated with it and 1,811 have three or more.

Housing will continue to be a most important element in the Town Plan. The relative uniqueness of Darien's housing stock, with its significant capacity to accommodate a much larger population, the issue of preserving the Town's single-family residential character and the development of the DBR and DMR Zones and other factors will be focal points of this effort.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Environmental factors continue to be of significance to the establishment of sound development practices, land protection and preservation needs and the quality of life enjoyed by the townspeople. Many of the major decisions affecting Darien's natural resources have already been made. Environmentally-based planning on a town-wide basis is no longer an option but rather most decisions will be made on a site by site basis. However, basic objectives must continue to guide all these actions in order to protect the features and resources which form the structure and character of Darien.

Coastal Resources

Darien's shoreline is a very valuable and fragile natural resource. It extends in an east-west orientation only 2.7 linear miles, but the actual shoreline is some 16.5 miles in length. This is due to a variety of features typical of the New England glaciated coast. Major natural features include the Five Mile River, Scott's Cove, the Darien Harbor, Gorhams Pond and Holly Pond. The Town has approximately five miles of rock bluff and escarpment; 76 acres of tidal marsh; 0.3 miles of sandy beach and numerous islands ranging from small rock outcroppings to larger vegetated islands such as the Fish Islands.

Darien still enjoys a greater percentage of its tidal marsh heritage than most other Fairfield County coastal communities. Tidal marshes contribute in many ways to the marine and human environments. Marshes act as feeding grounds, nursery areas, and habitat for the majority of estuarine species in Long Island Sound. They act as storm buffers, retain and detain storm water runoff and help filter sediment and other organic material from the water column. In addition, tidal marshes form scenic vistas for visual access, are valuable educational centers, and offer passive recreational opportunities such as wildlife photography.

In addition to the tidal marshes, Darien's shoreline includes sand beaches, cobble beaches and wooded shoreline all within the Town's coves and estuaries, and in the breaks in the rock face of the shoreline. Intertidal flats are also a very common feature of Darien's coastal area. These are extremely important habitat areas for shellfish and valuable feeding areas for shorebirds, waterfowl, certain mammals during low tide and many finfish and invertebrates during high tide. While the value and role of tidal marshes have been extolled, the contribution of the intertidal flats has been largely overlooked. Intertidal flats may suffer irreversible or significant impact from dredging, pollutant discharge, construction of structures, sedimentation and other intrusions. The Town's intertidal flats must be recognized as valuable coastal assets which provide shellfish habitat and feeding areas for a wide variety of animal life.

A review of the Municipal Coastal Program report adopted by the Commission in 1984 has established that it still accurately reflects the policies of this Town and is incorporated into this Plan. It has long been the policy of the Town to preserve the natural character of the coastline and discourage seawalls, docks, and other man-made structures.

More than 17,000 feet of Darien's shoreline have been permanently protected through the use of conservation easements, open space declarations, or other similar means as part of the effort to protect these fragile resources. This plan calls for extending this protection to other portions of Darien's shoreline.

Inland Wetlands

The inland wetlands in Darien are an integral part of the Town's drainage patterns and are found along almost the entire length of Darien's streams and rivers. Individual wetlands are not isolated entities, but rather part of the larger wetlands and drainage system. Upland wetlands play a major role in maintaining the functions and integrity of downstream wetlands and flood plains. Several important functions are served by the wetlands in the Town of Darien.

- Wetlands act as natural sponges, retaining runoff during storms. This water then leaves the wetland with considerably slowed velocity, thus minimizing downstream flooding problems. This capacity is not unlimited. Prolonged changes in the water level of wetlands can alter their vegetation patterns.
- Wetlands serve as erosion control areas. They trap sediment carried from upland areas before it reaches streams and ponds. If this sediment were allowed to reach the waterbodies and watercourses it would result in a deterioration in water quality and erosion of stream banks and the filling in of streams and ponds. However, excess sediment can also adversely impact the wetlands.
- Some wetlands, such as those along the Noroton River, are underlain by pervious sands and gravel and occur over water-bearing bedrock formations. Water from the wetland can percolate through the gravel and recharge the underground aquifer. If the aquifer is sufficiently thick, the water it maintains can be substantial. Water

which percolates through wetland gravel can also travel through cracks in the bedrock to other aquifers.

- Many pollutants are carried into wetlands by storm water runoff. Wetlands serve to trap by-products of automobiles. They also trap nitrates and phosphates that are washed from fertilized lawns. Wetland plants consume phosphates, thus preventing them from fertilizing the water in downstream ponds and streams and helping to keep those waterbodies free of algae.
- Wetlands are also productive areas which serve as a source of nutrients for freshwater fish. Wetlands provide breeding, nesting and feeding grounds, and cover for many forms of wildlife, waterfowl and songbirds. While not necessarily containing endangered plant species, wetlands may contain plant species that are unusual or uncommon in a particular area. Wetlands provide recreational areas for fishing, hiking and bird watching. They are also unique and interesting areas for environmental education purposes.

Topography and Soils

Inasmuch as Darien is almost fully developed, influences on use and development established by these factors are determined more on a site by site basis rather than the overall systems. However, a general understanding is still very much a part of the planning process. Ignoring or misinterpreting the characteristics of soil cover or geological foundations may result in construction or septic system failures, higher costs or other unintended adverse environmental impacts.

Darien is located on the Manhattan prong of the New England Upland, a division of the Appalachian Highlands. The Manhattan Prong is underlain by igneous and predominantly highly metamorphosed bedrock. Most of Darien is underlain by Harrison gneiss which are typically shallow and rocky. The northern and eastern portions of the Town are underlain by the Hartland Formation, which is a combination of schist and gneiss, with the schist portions accounting for gentler terrain. The principal area of bedrock outcrops is in the southeastern portion of the Town.

The inland portion of Darien is characterized by low rolling hills and small stream valleys. Elevations range from 50 to 275 feet above sea level with the highest point being near Pembroke Road.

Consideration of the engineering properties of the soils present on a site should be an integral part of any site design. Soils can be classified into general natural soils groups based on their form of origin. The soils in Darien and throughout the northern United States occur as a result of glacial activity. The soil types that characterize the Town can be generally categorized in Terrace, Upland and Wetland soils groups. These soils groupings vary by the texture of the soil, its depth to bedrock, and consequent suitability for septic disposal and other construction. Some soil types found in Darien are located over sand and gravel beds which can function as underground reservoirs or aquifers. These soils and the aquifers beneath them are valuable resources which should be protected for possible use in the future. In Darien, these soils can be found principally along the Noroton River and on the Wee Burn

Country Club site. They are also found in other more substantially developed areas of the Town.

Rivers and Streams

Darien's rivers and streams consist of 6 miles of frontage on the Noroton and Five Mile Rivers and some 10 miles of streams and brooks between the two rivers. The entire system drains to the south, into Long Island Sound.

In terms of total land area, including land outside the Town limits, the two largest drainage basins in Darien are that of the Noroton River to the west and the Five Mile River to the east. The Noroton River virtually forms Darien's entire border with Stamford and the Five Mile River forms a portion of the border with Norwalk. Much of the central portion of Darien drains into Darien Harbor either directly or via Goodwives River, Cummings Brook and Stony Brook and their tributaries. Tokeneke Brook and Wilson Brook drain into Scott's Cove.

Aquifers

Any underground geological formation that yields a significant amount of water is called an aquifer. Stratified drift, which can support large-scale, long-term water supply development, consists of interbedded layers of sand, gravel, silt and clay deposited in stream valleys and lowlands by the meltwater of receding glaciers. The greatest well yields can be derived from the sand and gravel portions of stratified drift deposits near large streams or rivers.

The same factors which make such areas valuable as water sources make them susceptible to contamination. Stratified drift deposits are covered by soils with high percolation rates which allow rainfall and runoff to easily recharge the groundwater. Unfortunately, these soils also easily transmit water containing pollutants. Because groundwater moves very slowly, contaminants may go undetected for some time. Even after pollutants have been discovered it may not be possible to rectify the situation.

In Darien, stratified drift aquifers are found along the length of the Noroton and Five Mile Rivers, much of the Goodwives River and Tokeneke Brook, and along the upper portion of Stony Brook in the Wee Burn Country Club. The Connecticut Water Resources Commission highlighted a portion of the aquifer along the Noroton River as one of the five in the southwestern part of the State favorable for the development of large scale water supplies. This area meets certain criteria relating to depth, size and stream flow and has a potential yield of 2.8 million gallons per day. The Rewak well, which is located in this general area, supplies 400,000 gallons or 20 percent of Darien's water supply on a daily basis. It is currently being investigated to see if its capacity can be increased.

This is not to say that the other aquifer areas in Darien should be ignored. These smaller aquifers may have the potential to provide more localized water supplies. The aquifer under the Wee Burn Country Club could be important in this regard. Open space preservation and environmentally sensitive land use policies above these aquifers is important to assuring future water supply.

Flooding

Flooding is a problem in both Darien's inland and coastal areas. Most of Darien's major river and streams are flood hazard areas along almost their entire course. Significant portions of the coastal area are also subject to flooding. The 100-year flood boundary (flood hazard area) has been determined for both the upland and coastal portions of the Darien by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Water Quality

Water quality in the streams which either originate in or are largely contained in Darien are of higher quality than streams partially contained in adjacent communities. The Town needs to reduce the amount of nitrogen entering Long Island Sound from non-point sources.

Environmental Protection

These vital environmental features require constant attention in order to protect them for the stated reasons and purposes in this plan. Constant change is involved in this process. New issues emerge such as the deposition of organic materials, largely leaves and grass clippings, by property owners into the Town's streams and waterbodies. This problem grows with each passing year as the Town becomes more intensively developed. While this may be a convenient method of disposal, the sedimentation rapidly deteriorates the waterbodies, adjacent wetlands areas, shoreline areas and other fragile resource areas.

STREETS AND TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

The Town recognizes the relationship between the quality of its residential character and the adequacy of the street system. The preservation of that residential character, and not merely the physical capacity of the existing roadway system, should guide future land use decisions. This section of the Town Plan analyses roadway capacity and limitations both as the basis for possible upgrading of the roadway system and to help establish the framework for the future Town policy with respect to land use.

Virtually all of the major arteries in Darien are State highways. By their very nature, their primary function is to link other major corridors together and to serve the regional needs of the State. A secondary function is that of serving local needs. As will be discussed more fully in this chapter, traffic volumes have grown appreciably since the last Town Plan was prepared in 1984. Use of these major arteries today clearly reflects their prominence in the Town's street system. But as volumes have increased, so has the inclination of motorists to find and use alternate (local) routes to by-pass "trouble spots". As a consequence, use of certain local roadways has become the arteries of choice - both by residents and regional commuters.

Although some improvements to the roadway network have taken place - spot intersection changes or signalization to improve capacity and safety and bridge widenings undertaken by the State - no major changes have occurred since 1984. Similarly, no major changes are contemplated over the near term future except possibly on I-95.

Existing Roadway System

Typically, roadways are classified by function. As shown in Figure 4 which comes from the Federal Highway Administration, their role in providing mobility versus land access forms

the basis of their classification. Three (3) broad categories are identified - arterials, collectors and

FIGURE 4.

to be pasted here
street classifications

local streets. Within each of these categories, roadways are sometimes further subdivided in major or minor groupings. Such a classification system can be applied to the Darien street system.

Principal (or major arteries) are those roadways where mobility is paramount. Service to abutting land uses is minimal or non-existent. Interstate I-95 is such an example where regional and national movements are solely intended and access /egress is controlled by a limited number of interchanges.

Minor arteries are roadways which supplement and interconnect to the major thoroughfares. They serve trips of more limited lengths and at a lesser mobility priority. Such a roadway could connect communities within a town and provide more limited access to abutting properties. U.S. Route 1 (Boston Post Road) is an example of a minor arterial as are State Route 106 (Hoyt Street), State Route 136 (Tokeneke Road), and State Route 124 (Mansfield Avenue). Within this category, of course, the most important thoroughfare is U.S. Route 1 because of its heavier volume levels and its regional connections to other Connecticut municipalities. Although it could, in a sense, be considered a major arterial, its role in Darien also consists of local access to abutting properties. The Town will continue to exercise access management as fully as possible on this major arterial as well as others within the community.

The Darien collector street system is one which serves both traffic circulation and local access. Additionally, these roadways typically feed into arterial streets. Streets such as Noroton Avenue, West Avenue, Brookside Road and Middlesex Road are prime examples. Volumes on these types of major collector streets are usually significantly less than the arterial thoroughfares as they may also access residential neighborhoods.

Local streets comprise the remaining minor collecting streets in the Town. Their role is primarily providing local access to abutting properties with mobility only a minor role.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data has been primarily obtained from the Connecticut Department of Transportation and represents the 1992 period. These counts were collected via automatic machine recorders over a 24-hour period. Supplementing this information, are manual peak hour traffic counts at 20 locations so as to compute intersection capacities. In addition, several 24-hour machine counts were also conducted to fill in voids in the current data base. All of the counts were made in April 1994.

Figure 5 highlights the current (1992-1994) traffic data for the Town of Darien. U.S. Route 1 (Boston Post Road) carries the heaviest daily flows within the Town (excluding I-95). As noted, 24-hour volumes range from 11,300 to over 20,000 vehicles with the most trafficked area being that portion of Route 1 between the railroad overpass and Mansfield Avenue.

Hoyt Street carries the next heaviest magnitude of traffic as volumes approach 13,000 daily vehicles near the New Canaan Town Line and about 11,000 vehicles near the Middlesex

FIGURE 5.

here
traffic data

Road/Christie Hill Road intersection to the south. This represents a 30-72% increase in traffic on Hoyt Street over the past ten years. This is on top of a 94% increase in traffic between 1965 and 1980. It is apparent that a significant portion of this traffic utilizes Woodway Road to enter Stamford and this intersection may need signalization.

Daily volumes on Mansfield Avenue range from 5,200-12,400 vehicles with the heaviest activity north of the Middlesex Road intersection. Middlesex Road is a by-pass route for some motorists on Mansfield Avenue as volumes on this corridor steadily decrease as one approaches the U. S. Route 1 intersection.

Noroton Avenue south of West Avenue has experienced a significant 35% increase in traffic. The traffic lights on Noroton Avenue from Maple Street north to West Avenue will be synchronized to alleviate the long queuing now experienced at these intersections. It is also essential to study what appropriate measures need to be taken to reduce the rate of growth of traffic using Noroton Avenue.

Other corridors such as West Avenue and Middlesex Road exhibit 24-hour volumes between 6,000-8,000 vehicles.

As a point of reference, I-95 between Interchanges #9 and #10 carried 124,000 daily vehicles in 1992.

Shown in Table 8 is a comparison of the daily volumes for 1980 and the 1992-1994 periods. Indicated are volume increases over this 12-14 year time span of about 30-60 percent. One factor affecting growth since 1980 has been the significant development of office space and employment in the neighboring and nearby municipalities of Stamford and Greenwich and retail development on Connecticut Avenue in Norwalk. It would be expected, as a result, that commuter and retail vehicular trips through the Town of Darien have substantially increased.

TABLE 8.**REPRESENTATIVE DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUME GROWTH (1980 to 1992-1994)**

ROADWAY LOCATION	1980*	1992-4	% CHANGE
Hoyt Street, S. of New Canaan Town Line	10,000	13,000	30%
Hoyt Street, N. of Camp Avenue	6,600	8,900	35%
Hoyt Street, N. of Middlesex Road	7,400	11,000 ⁽¹⁾	49%
Middlesex Road, E. of Hoyt Street	4,200	5,860 ⁽²⁾	40%
Middlesex Road, E. of Noroton Avenue	4,800	6,480 ⁽²⁾	35%
West Avenue, E. of Stamford City Line	6,200	7,830 ⁽²⁾	26%
West Avenue, W. of Leroy Avenue	5,200	6,750 ⁽²⁾	30%
U.S. 1, W. of Hollow Tree Ridge Road	7,400	11,400	54%
U.S. 1, E. of Noroton Avenue	8,200	11,300	38%
U.S. 1, W. of Route 136 (Tokeneke Road)	13,700	16,500	20%
U.S. 1, E. of Route 136 (Tokeneke Road)	13,700	20,100	47%
U.S. 1, E. of Brookside Road	11,900	15,700	32%
U.S. 1, W. of Norwalk City Line	14,000	19,000	36%
Rte. 124 (Mansfield Ave.), N. of U.S. 1	5,200	5,200	0%
Rte. 124 (Mansfield Ave.), S. of Middlesex Rd.	5,500	8,700	58%
Rte. 124, S. of New Canaan Town Line	8,100	12,400	53%
Tokeneke Rd., W. of Norwalk City Line	10,700	10,400	-3%
Tokeneke Rd., E of I-95	9,900	11,300	14%
Noroton Ave., S. of West Avenue	6,300	8,500 ⁽³⁾	35%
Hollow Tree Ridge Road, N. of U.S. 1	2,700	2,800 ⁽²⁾	4%

* Source: Connecticut Dept. of Transportation and the 1984 Darien Town Plan

(1) Based on 1993 counts by Greiner, Inc.

(2) Based on 1994 counts by Greiner, Inc.

(3) Estimated from 1994 peak hour counts by Greiner, Inc.

Public Transportation

There are three (3) primary forms of public transportation serving the Town of Darien. Each is discussed below:

1. New Haven/Metro-North Railroad

Two (2) stations on this rail line are located in Darien. The Darien station, situated along U.S. Route 1 and within the central business district of the community, provides approximately 687 public parking spaces. In addition, about 325 parking spaces are provided on privately owned land (Koons' lot located at the corner of West

Avenue and Leroy Avenue). A one-day windshield survey indicated a vehicle occupancy rate of around 90 percent of all the available public spaces with the Koons' lot at 80 percent occupancy. Virtually all of the vacancies in the public spaces were permit restricted. A significant number of permit spaces should be converted to meter spaces. At other times, use of the available parking spaces in all lots can be almost fully occupied.

The Noroton Heights station, located just north of I-95 between Noroton Avenue and Hollow Tree Ridge Road, provides about 700 parking spaces. Vehicle occupancy at this location was around 90 percent (with virtually all of these vacancies in permit restricted spaces).

Parking fees are imposed at both stations. Permits (in 1995) cost \$200 per year for resident or non-resident. Transient users can park at metered spaces costing \$1.50 for a 12-hour period. The Koons' lot fee is \$5.00/day or \$75.00/month.

Darien residents also utilize the Rowayton, Talmadge Hill, Springdale and Glenbrook train stations as well.

2. Connecticut Transit Bus Service

The Connecticut Transit Company operates two bus routes into or through Darien. Route F, which goes between the City of Stamford and the City of Norwalk, traverses U.S. Route 1 Monday through Saturday. Route G, connecting the downtown area of Stamford with the Noroton and Darien train stations, runs along West Avenue, Heights Road, Edgerton Street and back onto West Avenue Monday through Saturday. According to CTC, in 1993, about 110,000 passengers boarded or alighted from buses in Darien on the two routes. This information was made available by the Connecticut Transit Company. SWRPA is in the process of conducting a shuttle feasibility study for Darien, Norwalk and Stamford.

3. Taxi Service

There is one taxi company (Darien Yellow Cab Co., Inc.) operating from within the Town. It functions from an office at the Darien train station and currently operates ten taxi cabs.

Accident History

Accident information has been obtained from the Darien Police Department for the years of 1991, 1992 and 1993. To focus on those individual locations where mishaps have occurred more frequently, Table 9. has been prepared which indicates locations of four (4) or more accidents in any of the three years of data.

**TABLE 9.
HIGH ACCIDENT LOCATIONS**

INTERSECTION	1981	1991	1992	1993	3-YR TOTAL
Post Rd. & Noroton Av.	*	4(02)	5(02)	3(02)	12
Post Rd. & Rings End	10	3(02)	4(02,05)	2(02)	9
Post Rd. & Exit 11, NB Ramp Ent.	*	2(02)	4(02)	4(02)	10
Post Rd. & Ledge Rd.	10	4(02)	5(02,06)	4(02)	13
Post Rd. & Leroy Av.	*	3(02)	7(02,06)	4(02)	14
Post Rd. & Day St.	*	3(01,02)	5(02)	*	8
Post Rd. & Old Kings Hwy. So.	7	5(02)	2(02)	4(02)	11
Post Rd. & Sedgwick Av.	22	4(02)	6(02)	3(02)	13
Post Rd. & Mansfield Av.	13	9(02,03)	9(02)	10(02)	28
Post Rd. & Thorndal Cir.	*	3(01,02)	3(02)	3(02)	9
Post Rd. & Old Kings Hwy. No.	9	6(02)	5(02)	4(02)	15
Post Rd. & Birch Av.	8	2(02)	5(02)	5(02)	12
Post Rd. & West Av.	11	3(02)	9(02)	2(02)	14
Post Rd. & Brookside Rd.	28	6(02)	10(02,13)	8(02,09,13)	24
Post Rd. & Tokeneke Rd.	11	5(02)	6(02,06)	4(02,06)	15
Post Rd. & Exit 13 SB, Ramp Ent.	*	6(02)	5(02)	5(02)	16
Hoyt St. & Camp Av.	6	5(02)	9(02)	4(02)	18
Hoyt St. & Woodway	5	7(01,02)	4(02)	1(02)	12
West Av. & Noroton Av.	10	6(02)	6(02)	8(02)	20
West Av. & Herman Av.	5	4(02)	1(02)	*	5
West Av. & Holmes St.	*	1(02)	5(02,13)	3(02)	9
West Av. & Edgerton St.	8	3(02)	5(02,13)	8(02)	16
West Av. & Leroy Av.	*	3(02)	6(02)	2(02)	11
Post Rd. & Corbin Drive	17	8(02,06)	3(02)	7(02,13)	18
Mansfield & Sedgwick Av.	6	7(02)	6(02)	8(02)	21
Mansfield Av. & Stephen Mather Rd.	5	5(02)	11(02,13)	5(02)	21
Mansfield Av. & McLaren Rd.	*	3(02)	6(02)	2(02)	11
Middlesex Av. & Leroy Av.	10	2(02)	6(02)	5(02)	13
Middlesex Av. & Mansfield Av.	5	4(02)	2(02)	3(02)	9
Heights Rd. & Edgerton St.	*	4(02)	5(02)	5(02)	14
Heights Rd. & Noroton Av.	10	6(02)	7(02)	3(02,06)	16
Old Kings Hwy N. & #13 NB On-Ramp	*	6(02)	3(02)	7(02)	16
Old Kings Hwy S. & Goodwives Dr.	*	3(02,06)	4(02)	*	7
Hollow Tree Ridge Rd. & Heights Rd.	12	13(02,06)	11(02)	3(02)	27
Ledge Rd. & 11 SB Ramp Ent.	*	4(02)	3(02)	3(02)	10
Ledge Rd. & Noroton Av.	*	6(02)	7(02)	3(02)	16
Tokeneke Rd. & Old Farm Rd.	*	2(02)	4(02,06)	2(02)	8

Legend:

10 (02) = Number of Accidents (Type of Accidents)

Accident Code:

01) Veh. vs. ped.	08) Overturned veh.
02) Veh. vs. veh.	09) Off-roadway
03) Veh. vs. train	10) Non-collision
04) Veh. vs. animal	11) All others
05) Veh. vs. bicycle	12) Fatal accident
06) Veh. vs. fixed object	13) Personal Injury
07) Other object	14) Property damage

Several locations, however, stand out in terms of accident frequency including:

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of Accidents 1991-1993</u>
Boston Post Road @ Mansfield Ave.	28
Hollow Tree Ridge Road @ Heights Rd.	27
Boston Post Road @ Brookside Road	24
West Avenue @ Noroton Ave.	20
Mansfield Avenue @ Sedgwick Ave.	21
Mansfield Avenue @ Stephen Mather	21
Boston Post Road @ Corbin Drive	18
Hoyt Street @ Camp Ave.	18

As shown above, the highest accident location of the three year period was on the Boston Post Road at Mansfield Avenue. This is also the location where traffic volumes on U.S. Route 1 are at or near their heaviest. Virtually all of these accidents involved vehicle to vehicle collisions with no injuries reported. Similarly, all of the accidents at Hollow Tree Ridge/Heights Road were vehicle collisions. At this location, however, the accident rate has been dropping with 1993 showing only three (3) mishaps. This latter condition may be a result of better sightlines being provided with the completion of the new bridge over the Metro-North tracks. The Boston Post Road-Brookside Road intersection continues to experience a high number of accidents. The Brookside approaches are slightly skewed, forcing the motorist to position the vehicle at a potentially dangerous point in the intersection when turning left from any approach.

A plot of some of the high accident locations is shown in Figure 6 for the Town as a whole.

FIGURE 6

here
accidents

Roadway/Intersection Capacities

The capacity of a roadway to carry traffic is governed by the geometrics of the artery, number of lanes provided, the mix of vehicle types, lateral (side) clearances, the frequency of intersecting streets and any traffic control devices (such as signals or stop signs). Under free flow conditions, and with ideal geometrics, arterial roadways could carry up to a maximum of approximately 1,900 vehicles per lane per hour. However, this flow rate, as discussed later, would be considered unacceptable as the artery would be saturated. A more acceptable limit, in terms of traffic engineering, would be 1,200-1,400 vehicles per hour for arterial roadways under mostly ideal conditions and with free flow characteristics. The capacity of collector streets is generally significantly less.

With only a few exceptions within Darien, free flow cannot be achieved due to stop sign and signal control of intersections. Accordingly, it is the intersections on the various arteries which, in reality, dictate and limit the ability of a street to carry traffic.

The ability of an intersection to accommodate traffic is still dependent on the geometrics of the roadway, vehicle mix, lane arrangements, curbside parking and/or locations of bus stops. In addition, the type of control, stop sign or signal becomes a major component in the capacity computation. The capacity of an intersection is described in terms of "Levels of Service". Each level denotes how well or poorly an intersection is functioning. The Levels of Service are identified by letters "A" to "F" where "A" represents the best of conditions and "F" denotes extensive congestion and delays. Typically, Level of Service "C" conditions (or better) are desired during commuter peak hours. This level denotes only occasional back-ups or delays at peak traffic periods of a day. In some municipalities, short duration back-ups at intersections are considered tolerable at peak times. These conditions are representative of Level of Service "D". Any level of operation less than a "D" is not considered acceptable and remedial measures are usually sought. Provided in Table 10a. is a more detailed definition of Levels of Service for signalized intersections. Table 10b. covers stop sign controlled intersections. It should be noted that the definitions under these two intersection controls are somewhat different for the respective Levels of Service.

Shown in Table 11. is a comparison of Levels of Service (LOS) for various intersections in Darien - as computed with 1980 volumes and the current 1994 volumes. At a number of locations, the current Levels of Service are at "D" or worse. The most critical intersections, relative to the Table, are Hoyt Street at Middlesex Road/Christie Hill Road and Hoyt Street at Woodway Road. In both these instances, the intersections are controlled by stop signs - a 4-way stop in the former location and a single stop sign on the Woodway Road approach to Hoyt Street in the latter location. Traffic volumes on Hoyt Street are at the theoretical capacity limits of the roadway. Mansfield Avenue is also approaching its capacity limits due

to the physical characteristics of the roadway. The traffic growth is placing a greater burden on side roads such as McLaren Road and Sedgwick Avenue. The present two-way hour volume on McLaren is 345 vehicles in the morning and 295 vehicles in the afternoon, which is well over capacity and operating at a level of service C-D. Steps need to be taken to reduce further growth in traffic on this residential street as well as other similar streets near commercial zones.

TABLE 10a.**CAPACITY DEFINITIONS - SIGNALIZED LOCATIONS**

Levels of Service	1985 <u>Highway Capacity Manual</u>
A	delays less than 5 sec's/veh.
B	delays between 5-15 sec's/veh.
C	delays between 15-25 sec's/veh. Many vehicles still pass intersection without stopping.
D	delays between 25-40 sec's/veh. Most vehicles have to stop for signal and short duration back-ups may occur. This level is considered limit of acceptability.
E	delay between 40-60 sec's/veh. Significant congestion may occur.
F	delay greater than 60 sec's/veh. (over saturation).

TABLE 10b.**CAPACITY DEFINITIONS - UNSIGNALIZED LOCATIONS**

Levels of Service	1985 <u>Highway Capacity Manual</u>
A	little or no delays expected
B	minor delays may occur
C	back-ups may develop behind turning vehicles. "Average" delays are expected. Reserve capacity between 200-299 vehicles per hour.
D	long delays can be expected during peak periods. Reserve capacity between 100-199 vehicles per hour. This level considered limit of acceptability.
E	intersection approach handles greatest number of vehicles. Very long traffic delays with queuing. Reserve capacity between 0-99 vehicles per hour.
F	extremely long traffic delays and queuing (severe congestion).

TABLE 11.
INTERSECTION LEVELS OF SERVICE

INTERSECTION	1984 LOS*		1994 LOS		
	AM	PM	AM	PM	
West Ave. at Hollow Tree Ridge Rd.	A(1)	A	B	B	SIG
West Ave. to Noroton Ave.	A(1)	A(1)	B	B	SIG
West Ave. to Leroy Ave.	A	A	B	B	SIG
Hollow Tree Ridge Rd. at Heights Rd.	C or better	F or better	C-D	C	STP
Tokeneke Rd. at I-95 Off-Ramp	D or better	D or better	C-D	C	STP
U.S. Rte. 1 at Corbin Dr.			B	B-C	SIG
U.S. Rte. 1 at Mansfield Ave.			B	B	SIG
U.S. Rte. 1 at Noroton Ave.	A(1)	A(1)	B	B-C	SIG
U.S. Rte. 1 at Brookside Rd.	A	A(1)	B	C	SIG
Hoyt St. at Camp Ave.	A	B	C	B	SIG
Hoyt St. at Woodway Rd.	F or better	F or better	D-E	D	STP
Mansfield Rd. at McLaren Rd.	E or better	C or better	D	C	STP
Heights Rd. at Noroton Ave.	D or better	F or better	C	B-C	SIG
Mansfield Rd. at Middlesex Rd.	E or better	F or better	C	D	STP
Hecker Ave. at Noroton Ave.			B	B	SIG
Hollow Tree Ridge Rd. at Middlesex Rd.			B-C	A	STP
Hecker Ave. at I-95 NB On-Ramp			B	A	STP
Brookside Rd. at Old Kings Hwy North			A	C	STP
Noroton Ave. at Middlesex Rd.			B	B	SIG
Hoyt St. @ Middlesex Rd/Christie Hill Rd.			F	F	STP

Legend:

- (SIG) SIGNAL CONTROLLED INTERSECTION
(STP) STOP SIGN CONTROLLED INTERSECTION

- * As found in the 1984 Town Plan
(1) Although there is adequate capacity at these intersections, vehicles are experiencing difficulty completing left turns during the peak hours.

At Hoyt Street and Middlesex Road, daily back-ups occur during the weekday morning commuter hours on the southbound Hoyt Street approach. These queues extend northward to (and sometimes beyond) the Holmes School site. The other three approaches to this location operate acceptably (Level "C" or better) at these times as volumes are much less. In the afternoon commuter hours, back-ups on the eastbound approach to the intersection occur as commuters head home from Stamford.

At the Hoyt Street intersection with Woodway Road, vehicle delays are sometimes evident on the side street approach. This is because motorists must wait for gaps in the traffic flow

on Hoyt Street in order to turn left to head northbound toward the Merritt Parkway or New Canaan. The morning commuter period exhibited a slightly worse level of service than in the afternoon.

In reviewing Table 11, it should be remembered that the Levels of Service represent the intersection as a whole. This is particularly the case for signalized intersections. For example, at the Boston Post Road/Corbin Drive intersection, Levels of Service "B" and "C" are shown. However, it has been observed that back-ups in the left turn lane on the Corbin Drive approach sometimes occur and operates at Level "D" due to the limited green time afforded to the side street. However, the other street approaches at this location are functioning at "C" or better. It is only at the stop sign locations where the depicted Level of Service more closely represents the worst approach condition. Lastly, the capacities at each of the intersections were undertaken assuming an isolated location. If, for example, back-ups extend from a nearby downstream location to the subject intersection and traffic movements are restricted, this condition was not factored into the output. As a case in point, back-ups on the Boston Post Road around the railroad overpass do occur at peak commuter times and sometimes in off-peak periods with traffic blocking other Boston Post Road intersections. Remedial measures, if possible, are needed at the location of initial congestion.

FISCAL CONDITIONS

Current Fiscal Conditions

The current fiscal condition of Darien is excellent based on several key indicators. The Town has operated with a budget surplus in seven of the last ten years generating a total of \$3,682,000 of surplus in those 10 fiscal years. The General Fund balance as of June 30, 1995 had a total available surplus of \$5,692,586. Together with other available balances, the Town has almost \$6,500,000 in reserve. For many years now, Darien has had a Aaa bond rating and this continues to be maintained. As of 6/30/95, long term debt of \$11,950,000 is low as evidenced by the net bonded debt at a ratio to assessed value of .29% or \$443 per capita. This debt is due to be fully paid in the year 2015, however, as of 6/30/95 there was \$22,765,000 in authorized, unissued debt, with \$13,065,000 of that amount issued in August, 1995. The remainder is expected to be issued sometime in 1996. Reflecting all of this, tax rate increases have been held close to the rate of inflation in recent years.

Other improvements in the Town's economic health are also taking place. The unemployment rate which climbed in the early 1990's is beginning to decline from a high of 3.2% in 1992 down to 2.3% as of 7/95. Construction expenditures which declined in the late 1980's are again increasing from a low of \$19,606,000 in 1990-91 to \$44,571,000 in 1994-95.

Future Outlook

A number of significant developments are expected to affect Darien's financial outlook over the next decade.

The growth in the Grand List has dropped from an average of 2.7% between 1957 and 1965 to 2.3% between 1967 and 1977, and 1.9% between 1979 and 1988. It has dropped to 0.9% between 1989 and 1994. The Board of Finance is using an estimated growth of 0.9% per year in its current five year projection. This limited growth is a result of the generally lower economic growth in recent years, a lower rate of inflation and the fact that the Town is almost fully developed as reported in the section on Existing Land Use. The relative drop in value of commercial property in Darien from a high of 9.9% of the Grand List in 1992 to 9.3% in 1994 has moved a larger share of the tax burden to the residential property owners. In 1993, Darien's residential properties had a real value of \$3,293,971,213 and its commercial properties \$372,079,857 for a combined total of \$3,666,051,070. The drop in commercial values can be attributed to the commercial real estate recession in Connecticut which has reduced the selling price of many buildings and left a high vacancy rate in Darien. This trend is not likely to be reversed in the near future.

There has also been a decline in intergovernmental revenues available to Darien. They reached a high of \$2,829,000 in 1987, were \$805,837 in 1995 and have been budgeted at \$564,656 in the 1995-96 fiscal year. Federal revenue sharing has ceased to exist and State aid for education continues to decline as State funds were redirected to less affluent communities. On a positive note, income from licenses, permits and charges for services

have continued to grow as the Town has been forced to charge more for governmental services such as waste removal and the use of parks and beaches.

The cost of operating the Town government has increased by an average of 6.2% over the 10 years from 1985 to 1995. This is attributed largely to increases in wages, benefits and cost of services. The increase in 1995-96 is largely due to the increased debt service requirements caused by the elementary school additions.

The school population which hit a peak of 5,156 in 1963, and then dropped to 2,643 in 1989, has now started to climb again and is projected to grow again to about 4,000 pupils by the year 2000. This will have a decided economic impact on the cost of running Darien as additional school facilities will have to be added at the elementary, middle and high school levels. There will also be substantial additional operating costs to educate this expanding school population. Studies are currently underway to determine how best to accomplish this. The increased growth of school population is projected to increase the annual growth in the mill rate from close to inflation (approximately 3% per year) without this growing school population to approximately 6% per year with the added school children. The growth of school-aged children is also straining other Town facilities such as playing fields and gymnasiums. These needs are reported in other sections of this Plan.

Summary

Economic demands on the Town will be impacted by a combination of slow growth in the grand list and less State aid while demands for services are increasing, especially those resulting from the growing population of children:

- bonding for capital costs to spread these expenditures over time.
- the careful prioritization of projects being considered.
- constantly searching for and establishing ways to operate the government more efficiently and economically.
- establishing higher taxes to carry the operating and bonding costs.

The major new expenditures facing Darien over the next several years will be created by the need to meet expansion requirements. Other significant costs likely to be incurred by the Town include increased costs for waste removal, improvements to Darien's downtown, maintaining public safety, open space acquisition, and upgrading the Town's infrastructure such as the Town's storm drainage, sanitary sewer and sidewalks and other service needs to maintain the Town's property values.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The objective of this section is to describe, evaluate and define the role of Darien in the regional context, and discuss the goals and objectives of regional planning as it relates to the Town.

Physical Conditions

The major natural regional link between Darien and other Connecticut communities as well as with New York is the Long Island Sound. Many tributary rivers and streams characterize the Connecticut side of the Sound. For Darien, the Noroton River on the Stamford side and the Five Mile River on the Norwalk side define the west and east boundaries of the Town, and make clear natural borders between the Town and its adjacent cities. The Goodwives River bisects the Town as it flows through Gorhams Pond into Darien Harbor and the Sound.

Other physical links to the Region are man-made in nature. These include:

- The New Haven Branch of Metro North, which is routed between New Haven and Grand Central Terminal in New York. Within Darien, there are two station stops, at Darien and Noroton Heights. Service is also immediately available to Darien residents at the Springdale and Glenbrook Stations in Stamford, Talmadge Hill in New Canaan and the Rowayton Station in Norwalk.

- Interstate Route 95 (the John Lodge Connecticut Turnpike), which has three full interchanges (Exits 10, 11 and 13) and one partial interchange (Exit 12) within the Town. This is the major eastern seaboard expressway.
- U.S. Route 1 (the Boston Post Road), which generally parallels I-95 through the Town. In Darien and its immediate Connecticut neighbors, Route 1 is the spine of local commercial activity.
- The Merritt Parkway (Route 15), which, although it does not pass through the Town, is immediately accessible in New Canaan from Mansfield Avenue (Route 124) and Hoyt Street (Route 106) in Darien.

Adjacent Towns

The Town of Darien abuts portions of three other municipalities. Clockwise, these include the City of Stamford, the Town of New Canaan, and the City of Norwalk.

- Holly Pond The southwestern town boundary with Stamford runs down the middle of Holly Pond and the two municipalities have a long history of cooperating in the maintenance of the tidal gates that regulate the tidal flow for Holly Pond. Long known as Cove Pond, this area was originally an open estuary with a gut or narrow passage between Brush Island on the Darien side and Cove Island on the Stamford side. What makes Holly Pond a millpond rather than a harbor is the dam constructed across the gut in 1791. Problems currently confronting Holly Pond include: extensive sedimentation near the Boston Post Road bridge that will require dredging; the need for a sedimentation basin; measures to intercept oil and gas runoff from the Turnpike service station and the DOT facility; management of the swan population, and repairs to the tidal gates so as to increase seasonal tidal flushing of the pond to minimize sedimentation and improve water quality. After much study, the two towns are jointly moving to correct these problems and restore its health to Holly Pond. Approximately \$250,000 in State funds has been appropriated, and supplements additional funding from both municipalities. Work is planned to commence in the near future.
- Boston Post Road at Stamford Line In Darien, the Town Plan of Development indicates that the southwesterly segment of the Boston Post Road between Noroton Avenue and the Stamford line should remain in residential use. This has generally been accomplished with a few non-conforming exceptions. However, on the Stamford side, development along East Main Street includes major office development in the area of the Exit 9 interchange as well as strip service areas. The fact that the Town boundary in this area is defined by the Noroton River and a small public park on the westerly side of Holly Pond in Stamford, helps to create a visual buffer to this development from the residential area in Darien. As disclosed in resource analyses prepared for the Coastal Area Management Program, Holly Pond, which separates the municipalities south of the Boston Post Road is severely stressed, in part due to adjacent land uses.
- D'Addario property In 1992 this area was rezoned Designed Multi-Family Residential (DMR). The western boundary of this 49.6 acre zone is the Noroton River, which also

serves as the town boundary with Stamford. The land south of Lenox Avenue in Stamford has been developed with attractive single-family residential lots of 7,500 square feet per family. Both the Stamford and Darien sides of the Noroton River have been identified as lying over the Noroton River stratified drift aquifer. Moreover, the revised FEMA mapping has enlarged the floodway area within this DMR Zone. Any development within this district should, therefore, not compromise this aquifer, encroach on the flood plain or floodway, and be compatible with the adjoining residential zones in Stamford as well as in Darien.

- Stamford Industrial Area Between Middlesex Road and Camp Avenue One of the major industrial areas of the City of Stamford adjoins Darien for approximately 7,500 feet between Middlesex Road and Camp Avenue. This wide strip, paralleling the New Canaan branch of the railroad and bordering the Noroton River, contains a wide variety of industrial facilities which vary in age, size, and use. It is partially within a Light Industrial Zone, but the bulk of the area is within a General Industrial Zone. While the zoning is in accordance with the Stamford Master Plan, the appropriateness of this zoning should be re-examined and Stamford should be encouraged to increase setbacks from the Noroton River and establish a greenbelt along the Noroton River.

On the Darien side of the Noroton River there is a R-1/3 One-Family Residential Zone, the northerly portion of which is occupied by a cemetery. While the cemetery provides some buffer for the residential neighborhood on the easterly side of Hoyt Street, additional plantings are necessary. Most of the remainder of the area along the Noroton River towards Middlesex Road is developed with single-family homes on one-third acre lots. Along Echo Drive, and occupying part of the border area, is the Middlesex Swimming Club and a 13.6 acre parcel along the Noroton River is protected by the Darien Land Trust. Where houses already exist, most of the residents have taken it upon themselves to provide landscaping to screen the adjoining industrial area. This, however, is not sufficient particularly as industrial development intensifies and buffering on the Stamford side remains inadequate.

Since the residential area in Darien and the industrial area in Stamford have separate street circulation systems, and since the river forms a suitable natural barrier between them, planning for these two areas should be done on a level that will make it possible for them to co-exist on a mutually satisfactory basis in the future. The strengthening of the river as a natural buffer area would be greatly aided by a wide greenbelt of screen planting along both banks. This will require coordination with the City of Stamford as well as certain special requirements for planting on the Darien side.

- Camp Avenue to Woodway The area on the Stamford side of the Noroton River, from Camp Avenue northerly to Woodway Road is within a multi-family residential district, while the land on the Darien side is zoned for single-family residences. The Rewak Well is located on the Darien side of the Noroton River in this area. It currently provides close to 10% of the public water supply for the Town of Darien and is currently being studied to determine if it can produce a substantially larger portion of the Town's water supply. The protection of this public water supply is of regional significance.

To the north of Woodway Road in Darien is the 140.5 acre Woodway Country Club which is within a two-acre residential zone, but is bounded by a one-acre residential district and a half-acre residential district across the Noroton River in Stamford.

- New Canaan In New Canaan, the land along Darien's northerly boundary is zoned and utilized for single-family dwellings on one and two acre lots. The southerly portion of New Canaan is very similar to Darien in terms of environmental features, and the general compatibility of the two towns' land use policies for residential districts make the transition between the towns almost unnoticeable. The recent expansion of the parking facilities at the Talmadge Hill Railroad Station is not, however, sympathetic to adjacent residential development in Darien, and New Canaan should be encouraged to provide appropriate landscaping buffers for the existing and any proposed expansion of these parking facilities to protect adjoining Darien residences. A major parcel of land straddles the Darien and New Canaan town lines in the area of Brookside and Stephen Mather Roads. The two towns should respect the historic and open space characteristics of this area. Both towns should also carefully review the water flow and impact of any water diversion from the Five Mile River.
- Norwalk North of Boston Post Road Business Area: All of the land on the Norwalk side of the Town line between New Canaan and the Boston Post Road business area is zoned to permit higher density, single-family residential developments than those permitted on the Darien side of the line. Along the Route 1 corridor Norwalk has designated a light industrial district which creates a very distinct edge with Darien, Darien has designated the Boston Post Road area next to Norwalk as part of a SB-E (Service Business - East) Zone. This zone permits modest commercial activities which bear no comparability to the extremely large scale of development promoted by Norwalk at its westerly border. Recent developments in Norwalk have impacted the Darien service businesses such as restaurants, and increased adverse traffic and environmental impacts.

Although the Boston Post Road in the vicinity of the Norwalk line has for many years been strip-zoned for non-residential development, there are basic differences in the concept and execution of such development in both communities. Whereas, in Darien, the zone is a modest 150 feet deep and is intended for service business uses, in Norwalk it is much deeper (600 feet) and intended for office and intensive shopping center commercial uses. Office development of some 400,000 square feet has been established in Norwalk, generally opposite the Exit 13 ramps. Several large shopping centers have been constructed further to the east in this area and more are being planned. The sheer size of these offices and the intensity of the commercial development significantly alters traffic flow on Route 1 and interrupts the smooth visual flow between Darien and Norwalk.

The Town of Darien and the City of Norwalk still have an opportunity to plan for a greenbelt along portions of the Five Mile River from Route 1 south to the harbor. This plan could include a combination of both conservation easements that merely preserve the riverbank in its natural state, but provide for no public access, to open

space that has trail systems so as to allow the public an opportunity to better appreciate the beauty of this river.

- Rowayton Across the Five Mile River from Darien, is the Rowayton neighborhood business center and a variety of marine- related facilities. A large number of private boats are moored there and the area is within a commercial district intended to serve the Rowayton community. On the Darien side, Five Mile River Road runs approximately parallel to the shoreline. Westerly of it, the land is almost fully developed with single-family residences. The area between the road and the River is only partially developed, however, due to an extremely limited land area and environmental constraints. Both sides of the road are within the R-1/2 One-Family Residential Zone. The Coastal Area Management Plan discusses potential visual, aesthetic and navigational improvements to this area. The management of the Five Mile River harbor is under the jurisdiction of the Five Mile River Commission, consisting of representatives from both Darien and Norwalk. This Commission is currently addressing the need to dredge this intensively used harbor and the overcrowding of moorings. The Commission is an excellent example of how two municipalities have long worked together in the management of this significant environmental and recreational resource.

Regional Connections

Darien occupies a position in the Region that is characterized by unique features as well as by features common with other towns and cities. The Town exhibits many different types of economic connections with the Region as a whole, and with its more immediate neighbors.

In terms of retail marketplaces, Darien occupies a minor niche in the Region. Located between the cities of Stamford and Norwalk, Darien does not compete with these large, denser municipalities to meet the retail demands of the regional market. The Darien commercial centers were originally planned and designed to meet the local shopping and convenience needs of Darien residences and, in this mode, they are quite successful. For larger or more specialized purchases, Darien shoppers are able to travel to regional centers in Stamford, Norwalk, New York City and other locations, such as White Plains. Conversely, it is not necessary for other residents of Fairfield County to travel into Darien to fulfill their regional shopping needs.

Darien continues to work with other towns in the region to solve common problems. Darien's Police Department, three volunteer Fire Departments and the Post 53 Ambulance Corp all participate in a regional emergency response system recently organized by SWRPA. Darien is the home of a State emissions testing facility as well as a major DOT maintenance facility. The Town is a member of the CRRA, the regional resource recovery facility located in Bridgeport and the Darien Sewer Commission for the past twenty years has shared in the cost of operating the Stamford sewage treatment facility. Darien also participates in the Regional Job Corps Program, the Regional Van Pooling for the elderly and the handicapped and has a contract with the City of Norwalk for Visiting Nurses Services.

South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)

The 1995 Regional Plan

The South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) was created by an act of the Connecticut Legislature in 1962. Darien joined the Agency as one of five original members and actually provided the agency with its original office space. Three other towns have since joined. The first Regional Plan was adopted by SWRPA in 1974, the second Plan was adopted in 1983 and a 1995 Regional Plan is about to be adopted.

The Regional Plans have long proposed to take notice of changes which have occurred and to reshape the policies and objectives when necessary to reflect new issues. The Regional Plan establishes goals with the following tenets:

- balance between development and environmental resources
- balance between employment growth and housing supply
- balance between jobs and work force skills
- promotion of most cost-effective solutions to regional problems through inter-municipal response, where possible.

The SWRPA document identified some of the assets and problems to be addressed through its adopted plan. Just as Darien shares the assets of the region, so is the Town concerned with regional problems. These problems affect Darien in varying degrees and, accordingly, the Town works with SWRPA and other communities in the region to find solutions.

The following are some of the most serious problems facing the region in 1995 according to SWRPA:

1. Traffic congestion compounded by inadequate rail freight service and the shortage of rail passenger equipment.
2. Lack of employment opportunities for the unskilled.
3. Lack of balance between employment growth and the supply of affordable housing.
4. An insufficient amount of appropriate housing for the elderly, young and even those with middle incomes.
5. Air pollution, and the need to comply with the Clean Air Act.
6. Water quality of Long Island Sound.
7. Inadequate Public Open Space.

8. Design problems, including poor use of the waterfront, lack of pedestrian facilities in urban areas, and strip development.

Balanced against the Region's present problems are numerous assets and resources which contribute to its strength and livability. Planning for the future must carefully guard these resources. Among the Region's most significant assets are:

1. The attractive character of the natural terrain.
2. An abundant shorefront.
3. A substantial amount of private open space.
4. The high quality of development in most areas.
5. Historic structures and areas.
6. Railroad service to every town except one.
7. Excellent school systems.
8. Community interest in rebuilding deteriorated neighborhoods.
9. Corporate management support with personnel and funds to solve area problems and enhance the environment.
10. A regional planning agency forum that is used by each of the nearby towns to discuss and address regional problems.

The policies and objectives of the 1995 SWRPA Regional Plan are based on a recognition of the distinct identities and different functions of the municipalities of the Region, as well as their common features and goals. Darien's local planning policies are in conformance with SWRPA's Regional Plan.

SWRPA Plan Land Use Map

SWRPA has prepared a regional land use map to accompany its regional goals and policies outline. Like the map adopted as part of the 1974 and 1983 Regional Plans, the eight towns are coded into residential land uses; economic development centers, regional public facilities, and open space lands. For Darien, most of the land use designations shown in 1984 are those shown in the 1995 update.

The SWRPA Plan does not show any changes in residential land use intensity, other than the inclusion of the newly adopted multi-family zoning. In Darien, the SWRPA map shows residential land in the northern part of the Town at a density of 0.5 to 0.9 units per acre (unsewered and likely to remain so); most land on either side of the central transportation core at a residential density of 1 to 1.9 units per acre (with public services); and some

residential lands immediately adjacent to the central transportation corridor at a higher density of 2 to 7.9 units per acre.

With reference to commercial uses, the map shows the Darien central business district providing the local retail service function. This update is more explicit in classifying business areas in terms of the level of intensity of development. For Darien, the map designates the central business area as a "Town Center". The Regional Plan encourages emphasizing the centrality of this Darien's Town Center in lieu of urban sprawl and strip zoning. The policy of centrality is the predominant organizing principle for the Regional Plan. The Noroton Heights Shopping Center is designated as "Local Center".

Housing

Housing is a matter of regional interest because the condition, variety of types and range of affordability relate directly to the ability of the region to keep and attract jobs. Town plans of development, and more particularly the local zoning regulations governing residential density, establish local housing policy. The actual construction of affordable housing must have local support if it is to occur. In 1983 SWRPA recommended that: "The region must provide some low cost housing units for service workers who receive modest salaries and cannot afford expensive transportation costs. A fair share approach to this housing problem should be acceptable to every community." Since 1983 Darien has made significant progress in achieving this regional goal.

The State Plan of Conservation and Development of 1992 emphasizes the coordination of housing, economic development, and public transportation so as to bring together jobs and the work force. The State Plan recommends that in most cases, new development should occur where sewer, water, and most other services exist or can be reasonably provided. It is further recommended in the State Plan that housing solutions favor utilization of mass transit, thereby reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. The State Plan supports housing development which respects natural environmental limitations, including those related to the physical suitability of sites, preservation of open space and natural resources, avoidance of flood prone areas, and maintenance of water quality.

As noted in the Residential Development section of this Town Plan, the overall residential patterns in Darien are quite diverse. Prior to 1984 the Town had 52 units of moderate income housing at Allen-O'Neil, operated by the Darien Housing Authority, but the zoning regulations did not permit multi-family housing. In 1984 the Town made a significant change in its housing policies by providing for a multi-family residential development in a Designed Business and Residential (DBR) Zone in the center of town. This housing policy has resulted in:

1. The Town donating the land for, and the Darien Housing Authority constructing, 30 units of low income elderly housing.
2. The Town purchasing the land and arranging for a non-profit housing corporation to construct 30 units of moderate income housing.

3. The construction of 160 multi-family condominiums, all sold for significantly less than the mean or median sales price of housing in Darien. Two of these units were constructed under the DBR moderate income inclusionary zoning regulations.

These housing policies and the significant new housing recently constructed thereunder are in accordance with the Darien Town Plan, the Regional Plan and the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Open Space, Recreation and Long Island Sound

The goal of the 1995 Regional Plan is to provide adequate neighborhood, municipal, and regional active and passive open space throughout the region, with particular concern for urban areas. The most significant recreational resource in Darien and the only resource of regional significance is Long Island Sound.

It is the policy of the 1995 Regional Plan to treat Long Island Sound as the South Western Region's largest and most important open space, especially its shoreline and islands such as the Fish Islands in Darien. The Regional Plan recognizes that while all shoreline property below the mean high tide line is in the public domain, access to it from the land is limited. The Regional Plan recommends that when suitable waterfront property becomes available, serious consideration should be given to securing public access through acquisition or easement. Darien continues to make a significant contribution to improving the health of Long Island Sound by adhering to policies contained in Darien's Coastal Area Management (CAM) Plan of 1984. Darien's CAM plan is intended to protect coastal resources and encourage coastal uses such as boating, fishing and recreation. Darien's coastal site plan review regulations are consistent with these policies.

Regional environmental studies completed in 1992 reemphasized the need to address the hypoxia problem in Long Island Sound. Darien needs to increase its periodic inspection of septic systems within the coastal area and near rivers and streams. Setback requirements should be increased for septic systems within low elevation coastal zones. Where feasible, public sewers should be extended. Darien should continue to encourage low density residential development compatible with these natural resources. To minimize flood damage, the Town needs to continue to regulate construction in flood hazard zones. The Town should also consider how to increase public awareness of how fertilizers used on Darien lawns contribute to the hypoxia problem in Long Island Sound.

The Regional Plan also recommends an increase in the amount of open space of all sizes to provide relief from dense residential and commercial development and to provide a buffer between uses. Long range plans include creating linkages between existing open spaces and identifying and preserving potential open spaces along significant river corridors, scenic areas, view points and wildlife habitats.

Environment

Some of the most important environmental problems currently faced by the region are: 1) meeting the 1990 Clean Air Act Standards; 2) protection of coastal and inland wetlands and aquifers; and 3) expanding regional recycling and household hazardous waste collection.

The Clean Air Act should preclude any widening of the John Lodge Connecticut Turnpike because it would increase the capacity of the Turnpike, further degrading the air quality. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on increasing intra-state usage of the New Haven line, inter-town buses and multiple occupancy automobiles.

The Noroton River aquifer is of regional significance. It currently produces about 10% of the public water supply for Darien and is being considered for providing a larger portion of the Town's public water supply. It is therefore imperative that appropriate measures be taken to protect against potential pollution sources from the industrial park in Stamford that sits on top of this aquifer.

The Town has conducted several annual and semi-annual household hazardous waste collection days. These efforts have proven to be very successful and expensive. The Town's recycling program continues to be relatively successful. It is anticipated that the range of material collected may be expanded but no change in the current operation is anticipated for the foreseeable future.

State of Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan

The State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management has recently circulated a proposed revision to the State Conservation and Development Plan, originally adopted in 1974. The purpose of the plan is to provide policies, priorities and guidelines to ensure that State actions are directed toward the achievement of long range goals.

The results of the plan are mapped according to a land policy classification system. The State Plan classifies areas of the State into nine different land use categories, five of which are present in Darien. The Darien classifications are:

1. Urban Conservation Area - Stable, already developed neighborhoods and communities not classified as urban centers. Most of the Darien Center is classified as this type of land use.
2. Long Term Urban Potential Areas - Areas possessing physical characteristics suitable to intensive mixed used development, usually contiguous to existing urban concentrations but having fewer existing or programmed urban facilities and infrastructure to support urban growth in the immediate future.
3. Existing Preserved Open Space - Areas currently protected by public or quasi-public ownership. The only area in this category in Darien is the Woodway Country Club. It

appears that this designation should equally be applied to other large properties, such as the Wee Burn Country Club, the Darien Country Club, and the Ox Ridge Hunt Club.

4. Preservation Areas - Areas critical to Statewide environmental concerns for one or a number of reasons including public health, natural resources, cultural heritage, scenic or outdoor recreation. They are distinguished from existing preserved open space in that they are currently in private ownership. In Darien the Fish Islands would fall under this category given their use as both a wildlife refuge and as a regional recreational site.
5. Conservation Areas - The State Plan recommends that these areas should also be preserved for reasons similar to that of the preservation areas. In Darien, lands so designated are along the Noroton and Five Mile Rivers, and along most of the Long Island Sound shoreline.

The plan outlines goals and policies which will be used by the State in directing State actions, including:

- Promotion of equal opportunity for all citizens
- A strong, healthy Statewide economy
- Meaningful employment opportunities for all citizens
- Sufficient energy, wisely used
- An efficient public and private transportation network
- Quality environmental settings for all
- Affordable housing in a suitable community environment
- State self-sufficiency in food production
- Adequate supply and quality of water to support residences, industry, and recreation.

PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The following statements of objectives and policies are excerpted from the text of this Plan and are set forth to indicate more clearly many of the actions required by the Town over the next planning period. Additional background information and detail are included in the pertinent chapters as are additional objectives and policies.

I. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Darien should continue to be primarily a residential community and its attractive, low-density character maintained.
- B. Existing patterns of planned single-family residential densities should be generally maintained and the diverse alternative forms of housing currently provided for should be continued.
- C. Multi-family residential development should continue to be encouraged within the existing DBR and DMR Zones.
- D. Non-residential uses which are permitted in residential districts (either by right, such as a public school, or others which may be allowed by special permit) should be strictly regulated to protect such residential areas. More comprehensive procedures and explicit standards should be developed and adopted for special permit uses in residential zones.
- E. Deliberate actions must be taken to protect and preserve the Town's residential neighborhoods. The required actions include such matters as sidewalk maintenance and improvement, street tree maintenance, environmental protection and the enforcement of land use regulations, particularly with regard to any non-residential uses or home occupations.
- F. A complete analysis should be made as to the possibility of encouraging larger sized, high quality condominiums in Darien in the DBR and DMR zones.
- G. Historical residential areas important to the Town's character should be protected and preserved. These may in particular include:
 - areas around Ring's End Bridge.
 - sections of Hollow Tree Ridge Road.
 - Boston Post Road in Noroton.
 - Prospect Street.
 - Brookside Road near and at the intersection of Stephen Mather Road.

II. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Maintain existing business districts in their current sizes and locations and take actions to retain the existing scale of development, while improving the viability and appearance of commercial areas.
- B. Focus business development policies on those business uses and activities which serve and support the shopping and commercial needs of this residential community.
- C. Significantly enhance the design standards required for future development in all commercial zones to better encourage superior quality site development and building facades.
- D. Upgrade applicable land use regulations to meet contemporary needs and conditions especially in the Central Business District and particularly with regard to standards which would provide more flexibility for the development of eating establishments and other uses which would be beneficial to the Town.
- E. Continue and expand programs to improve the functioning, attractiveness, and viability of the Central Business District. Required actions include:
 - 1. completing the work of the Task Force on Downtown Improvements which includes the construction of new sidewalks; the installation of street lamps, benches and other amenities; establishment of parklets; and the improvement of business properties by the owners.
 - 2. expand the development of municipal parking and increased private development in appropriate areas such as the business blocks on both sides of Corbin Drive.
 - 3. continually monitor and take steps to improve management of the municipal parking system.
- F. Expand and improve the regulatory process on commercial development by:
 - 1. adopting those standards and regulations required to achieve Darien's objectives on commercial development.
 - 2. constantly seeking to facilitate application procedures. These include timing requirements, required application materials and related matters.
 - 3. continuing to provide coordinated technical review and assistance to potential applicants.

4. continually considering changes to the land use regulations to create a more "user friendly" approval process in an effort to continue to improve the business climate in Darien.

III. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

OPEN SPACE SYSTEMS

- A. The acquisition of open space and recreational lands is becoming more difficult with time as the number of available sites diminishes and costs increase. Accordingly, the Town must concentrate its energies on:
 - acquiring those few appropriate sites still available.
 - preserving the open space and recreational lands which presently exist in the Town, regardless of ownership.
 - guarding the integrity of the natural environment.

Specific parcels recommended to be acquired to provide or to maintain and expand existing park and recreation lands include:

1. Procaccini Parcel - this open, 15 acre property represents the Town's best opportunity for the provision of new playing fields or other municipal uses.
 2. Holmes School - residence surrounded by Holmes property. This would permit more flexibility in parking layout and provide expanded play area.
 3. Ox Ridge School - acquisition of residence and corral area to the east would enable improved traffic circulation and parking as well as increased play area. Vacant properties to the south would provide additional playfield area for both school and general recreational use.
 4. Middlesex School - only practical expansion of playfield involves acquisition of one acre property with residence adjacent to northerly boundary.
 5. Woodland Park - undeveloped parcel in southwest corner would permanently protect open space character of frontage along West Avenue.
 6. Weed Beach - possibility of acquiring or swapping to incorporate a residence on Short Lane into the beach site. There is also the potential for incorporating some or all of former sewer plant site into recreational use.
- B. Continue implementing the fourteen principal issues of coastal management which have been identified as involving shoreline protection, flood damage prevention, increased boating opportunities and related matters.

- C. Project development plans, or master plans, should be prepared for each of the major Town-owned recreation properties. These plans would be adopted and implemented by the Park and Recreation Commission and incorporated with this Plan as appendices by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- D. Deliberate steps should be taken by the Town to strategically provide small open space areas or parklets in commercial districts.

IV. **PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES AND UTILITIES**

- A. The Town should be prepared to make three property acquisitions if and when they become available which are vital to the adequacy of important public facilities. These are:
 - 1. Mason Property - this 2 1/2+ acre parcel is critical to providing an adequate Police Headquarters facility over the long term.
 - 2. Darien Library - the Town should be prepared to assist the Darien Library Association in acquiring, or sharing the use of, the Red Cross property to the north which is the only opportunity to expand the Library's already overtaxed facility.
 - 3. Koons' Property - this two acre parcel is most important to continue to provide necessary commuter parking over the short term and enable the development of a transportation center over the longer term.

In all three of these opportunities it is emphasized that these are essential services to the quality of life in Darien and practical alternatives are no longer available.

- B. The Town must make a commitment to either maintaining the Senior Activities Center at its current location or establishing a permanent alternative site.
- C. The master plan for the Town Refuse Disposal Center should be updated and implemented.
- D. Management programs should be implemented and kept continually up-to-date for:
 - 1. downtown municipal parking
 - 2. sidewalk construction and maintenance
 - 3. street tree maintenance and improvement
 - 4. town-wide storm drainage system.
- E. Communications systems for the Police Department, Post 53 and the three Fire Departments must be improved on a continuing basis.

- F. The Town must aggressively pursue the improvement of the water supply system by Connecticut American Water Company relative to supply, distribution, pressure, quality and related factors.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

As referenced in several other sections of this Plan, any dramatic increase in Darien's population in the next decade is not going to result from a large number of new dwellings to be constructed but rather, from larger household or family sizes residing in the existing housing stock. Consider that:

- the Existing Land Use analysis has established that there are, subject to environmental review, approximately 150 buildable or potentially buildable lots remaining in the Town.
- another area for a comparable number of new dwelling units is the DMR zone bounded by the Turnpike, Hollow Tree Ridge Road, the railroad and the Noroton River. Subject to wetlands, flood plain and other environmental constraints, approximately 150 multi-family dwelling units are potentially developable in this district.
- in 1960, the population of the Town included 18,437 persons who resided in 5,132 households.
- in 1990, the Town had 18,196 persons residing in 6,657 households.
- 86 per cent of Darien's homes have three bedrooms or more and 37 percent have four or more bedrooms.
- if the 1960 average family-size of 3.6 persons per family were to become the situation again in the future, Darien could readily absorb a population of 24,000 persons, or better than a 30 per cent increase, without constructing a single unit of additional housing. The assumption would be that these would be young families creating increased demands on the Town's educational, recreational and cultural facilities. Recent residential trends indicate that there is a significant in-migration of such young families as reflected in recent Board of Education census counts.

Single Family Residential Development

Single-family residential development should continue to follow the basic pattern established in the 1954, 1967 and 1984 Town Plans and the Zoning Regulations adopted pursuant to these Plans. This pattern locates smaller single-family residential lots closer to the central transportation and business spine of the Town, where also public sewer and water facilities are available. Larger lot districts are located farther from this central area. The one and two acre district locations also reflect development limitations imposed by soil, rock outcrop, and drainage conditions. This reinforces the pattern and policy of gradual decrease in density as distance from the central area of the Town increases. Little undeveloped land remains in the

closer in, smaller lot districts. Thus, development in these districts (R-1/5, R-1/3 and R-1/2) will continue to follow the prevailing pattern of existing land uses and densities.

The Town has long had five different residential density areas which may be grouped into two broader categories:

- low density:* two acres per residence
 one acre per residence
- moderate density:* one residence per half acre
 one residence per third acre
 one residence per fifth acre

In general terms, existing residential district boundaries accurately reflect existing land use. The residential district boundaries recognize and preserve the character of areas which already have an established residential type of development.

Existing Residential Development

The overall residential patterns in Darien are quite diverse, particularly when compared to other suburban communities. As reported in the chapter on "Housing", many of Darien's homes are large and expensive. However, many persons are surprised to learn that the oftentimes stereotyped image of this community being nothing but mansions on the water is far from the case. Some 32 per cent of the residentially zoned land in Darien is in the categories of 1/2 acre, 1/3 acre or 1/5 acre. Even within this, there exist numerous neighborhoods where average lot sizes are 4,000 or 5,000 square feet. These non-conforming areas were subdivided at the turn of the century for the most part and provide some of the more affordable single-family housing in Darien.

This diversity has been expanded even further since 1984 as a result of recent actions by the Planning and Zoning Commission and other Town bodies. Included are multi-family housing regulations, dwelling units permitted in most commercial areas, and subsidized housing developments.

Potential for Future Development of Private Recreation Lands

Another factor which could alter Darien's housing and population status very dramatically would involve any major changes to the large land holdings now classified as "private recreation". Most of these parcels are in the R-2 zoning district.

In addition to the importance of these private recreation lands as open space, the private clubs in Darien contain significant wetlands and watercourses and are, in most cases, over identified aquifers. Therefore, it is apparent that they serve not only a key function in terms of open space preservation and visual amenity, but also environmental protection as well. Accordingly, any possible subdivision and development of these lands is being reviewed solely as a factor which should be accounted for and is not being recommended or suggested in any form by this Plan. The following Table 12 sets forth this potential.

TABLE 12.
POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF PRIVATE RECREATION LANDS

ZONING		POTENTIAL	POTENTIAL NEW	POTENTIAL
DISTRICT	ACREAGE	EFFICIENCY	RESIDENTIAL	ADDITIONAL
		FACTOR	LOTS (D.U.s)	POPULATION
R-2	489.4	0.4 lots per acre	195	592
R-1	10.4	0.55 lots per acre	5	15
R-1/3	19.7	1.4 lots per acre	27	82
R-1/2	10.0	2.0 lots per acre	20	60
TOWN TOTALS:			247	749

Multi-Family Residential Development

Until the major policy changes were made in 1984, Darien had only a few non-conforming multi-family dwelling units within the Town and 52 units of moderate income housing at Allen-O'Neil. As part of that decade old planning effort, the Town was carefully analyzed and certain appropriate areas were identified as being suitable for the development of multi-family housing. All the sites were within the central part of Darien within or adjacent to the downtown area, with available water and sewer service and other features to properly allow the development of multi-family housing in lieu of further office building development. Following the establishment of the DBR Zone and the adoption of new DBR regulations, the five privately-owned properties identified in the study were fully developed a short period thereafter. One hundred and sixty new housing units were established. The Darien Housing Authority constructed 30 senior housing units on the Old Town Hall site within the DBR Zone. In 1989, the Commission expanded the DBR Zone to include the "Prindle-Hopkins" property bounded by Leroy Avenue, the railroad and Grove Street. The Town then commenced to plan for the construction of 30 moderate income units on the site.

The details of Darien's multi-family design standards are contained in the Town's Zoning Regulations. They have established density standards appropriate to the Town and the current intensity of land use in the area. Density standards are based on an average size of two bedrooms per dwelling. This was done fundamentally to encourage the development of

smaller units which were deemed to better meet the needs of the elderly and provide more affordable housing. The off-street parking regulations and the requirement of at least one garage space per unit has proven to be both necessary and appropriate. The Commission should consider improving open space standards. The existing requirements concerning setbacks, landscaped buffer areas, building coverage, building height, building bulk, and other site plan details have proven to be essential in designing multi-family housing in Darien. In 1992, the Commission rezoned the vacant 35.5 acre (D'Addario and DuHaime) parcels of land west of Hollow Tree Ridge Road and bounded by the railroad, the Noroton River and the Connecticut Turnpike. A new zoning district, designated as the Design Multi-Family Residential (DMR) Zone was created for this area and allows densities of 6 units per acre of multi-family housing or 8 units per acre if affordable housing is provided. Although this district is not centrally-located in downtown Darien, as are the DBR Zones, conclusions were reached that it was another good potential for alternative housing since it is adjacent or nearby to public transportation, shopping facilities, and primary traffic routes and was a preferred use over commercial development. It has a potential, subject to flood plain and other environmental constraints, of 150 to 190 new dwelling units, depending upon whether affordable housing incentives are utilized. The three tracts in this DMR Zone have the most significant, single potential for new housing in Darien. Most desirably, the Town may gain some more affordable housing.

In summary, through the carefully planned implementation and adherence to the Town Plan, it is anticipated that Darien will be able to adequately provide for its housing needs and continue to provide for a diversity of housing as encouraged by regional and State plans of development, all in a way which will be protective of the Plan's primary goal, which is the preservation and enhancement of Darien's predominantly single-family residential character.

Affordable Residential Development

Through the Darien Housing Authority, the Town has been maintaining 52 units of subsidized housing at the Allen-O'Neil development since 1952. These are comprised of 40 single family detached homes and 12 apartment units and provide affordable housing for those 52 families. The neighborhood is located at the northeasterly corner of West and Noroton Avenues and is the site of the former Fitch Soldiers Home.

In 1985, upon completion of the new Town Hall, the Town used the former 2.5 acre Town Hall property to construct 30 units of multi-family housing for the elderly. Upon completion, the units were quickly occupied and the old "Town Hall" project has been a major success for the Town. It is located on the westerly side of the Boston Post Road and Academy Street. The Town has worked with an affordable housing developer to create 30 units of moderate-income housing at a site owned by the Town at the intersection of Leroy Avenue and Squab Lane. As noted above, another opportunity to provide additional affordable housing in Darien exists in the possible development of the DMR zoning district.

Other policy changes made by the Planning and Zoning Commission to provide affordable housing in Darien include amending the Zoning Regulations to encourage apartment development above commercial uses. Apartment units over existing retail and service uses are normally affordable and desirable housing alternatives for childless households, both young and old, who may work in the business area or who desire the convenience which such

a location offers. It also has the advantage of introducing a night-time population which adds to the security as well as the variety of life in the business areas.

In 1987 the Commission amended its regulations to encourage apartments on the second floors in the CBD, DB1, DB2, DBR, SB, DC and NB Zones.

Non-Residential Uses

Certain non-residential uses have been permitted historically by Special Permit in the Town's residential districts. Among these are private schools, churches, social and recreational clubs, and governmental uses. When the current regulations were originally designed, many of these uses were relatively uncomplicated. For example, a church program may have been comprised basically of Sunday activities and perhaps study sessions or something similar on one or two weekdays. Today, the uses of the facilities are constantly expanding not only for religion-related activities but for aerobics classes, club meetings, day care programs and many other similar types of social activities. This is generally true for not only church facilities but also for social clubs and other special permit uses as well. While maintaining necessary control over these activities is difficult in and of itself, the situation is compounded by the strong demands within the community for space to conduct them. A comprehensive analysis of the land use regulations is needed to determine the most reasonable and effective manner of regulating special permit uses in the next decade. Considerations would include performance standards, increased buffer specifications, reducing the maximum building and site coverage, off-street parking requirements and related elements.

Another growing factor involves home occupations and the use of single-family dwellings for purposes other than a private residence. Home occupations and cottage-industry types of activities are not only a local issue but a national phenomenon. The increasing use of computers with a modem, FAX machines, and other modern technology are expanding opportunities to operate a business effectively out of one's home. These commercial accessory uses may be totally innocuous or a strong intrusion on a residential neighborhood depending upon the specific use and the specifics of the operation. The Commission has recently updated applicable sections of the zoning regulations to address these changing circumstances but it is apparent that additional analysis and enforcement measures are needed in order to respond to this evolving land use issue.

Practical regulations, effective enforcement and an informed population are required to meet these requirements. Non-residential uses should not be permitted to adversely affect entire residential neighborhoods.

Proposed Objectives for Future Residential Development

- Darien should continue to be primarily a residential community and its attractive, low-density character should be maintained.
- Existing patterns of planned residential densities shall be generally maintained and the diverse alternative forms of housing currently provided for shall be continued.

- Deliberate actions must be taken to protect and preserve the Town's residential neighborhoods. The required actions are discussed elsewhere in this Plan but include such matters as sidewalk maintenance and construction, street tree maintenance, environmental protection and the enforcement of land use regulations.
- Historical residential areas important to the Town's character should be protected and preserved. These include:
 - Areas around Ring's End Road bridge.
 - Sections of Hollow Tree Ridge Road.
 - Boston Post Road in Noroton.
 - Prospect Street.
 - Intersection of Brookside Road and Stephen Mather Road.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The relationship currently existing between the Town Government and Darien's business community is a very positive one. Regular communication occurs between members of the Chamber of Commerce and Town officials on a whole array of matters. Specific approaches have been established to assist in achieving mutual objectives. For example, in September 1990, the Board of Selectmen created the Task Force on Downtown Improvements whose purpose is to establish a program for, and carry out, a series of physical improvements in the Central Business District (CBD). In 1992, the First Selectman's Office established the Darien Business Development Committee to assist in attracting new businesses to Town and encouraging existing businesses to remain. The long standing policy, that Darien's commercial districts will not be expanded in any significant manner into residential areas, continues in effect, but it has been recognized that sound steps must be taken to make these existing commercial districts as viable as possible for the Town and the business community alike.

It is the objective of the Town to establish and/or improve appropriate standards for the maintenance of existing or the development of future facilities in all commercial zones. These enhanced design standards shall include: architectural standards compatible with the small town character of the Town; functional standards that contribute to superior site plans; and amenities that encourage pedestrian activities.

Central Business District

It has been stated many times that the two essential qualities of a healthy, vital downtown are having a diverse and concentrated mix of uses that create a strong, lively market and having a quality environment that establishes a distinctive sense of place. Much of the focus of this section will be concentrated on Darien's downtown and the needs to continue traffic and parking improvements, provide pedestrian amenities, enhance design standards and take other positive steps to improve the Central Business District. It has long been the policy of this Town to encourage those retail uses intended primarily to serve customers on the premises to locate within the CBD, where necessary parking and other support facilities can be best provided. A review of the objectives and proposals set forth in the 1984 Plan of Development regarding needed improvements in the CBD will demonstrate that a great deal has been accomplished. In particular, the traffic improvements outlined in the "Traffic and Transportation" section have been largely completed. These include:

- completely new, actuated synchronized traffic signals from the Exit 11 off ramp of the Turnpike northerly along the Boston Post Road to Brookside Road.
- completion of the Darien Center ("Mechanic Street") Municipal Parking Lot.
- completion of the Tilley Municipal Parking Lot.

- provision of right turning lanes on both Corbin Drive and the easterly side of Sedgwick Avenue.
- the selective elimination of on-street parking to improve traffic flow in the downtown.
- the elimination of left hand turns onto Tokeneke Road from the Boston Post Road and the regulation of left hand turns onto West Avenue. These two actions have substantially improved traffic flow through the railroad underpass.
- the loading dock on Center Street has been redesigned and reconstructed to provide unimpeded traffic flow on Center Street.
- numerous steps have been taken relative to new traffic signage, lane markings and other such improvements.

In terms of non-traffic related measures the railroad trestle, at the urging of the Task Force on Downtown Improvements, has been repainted for the first time in its history and new sidewalks and canopies together with all new lighting have been provided. This has made the trestle much more "pedestrian-friendly". In addition, the first few sections of new sidewalk and related pedestrian amenities have been completed in accordance with Task Force design standards in front of Post Corner Pizza, the entire length of the "Model Block" between Mansfield and West Avenues, CVS/Boston Market building, First Fidelity Bank to Edelweis Deli on Tokeneke Road and from Antiques of Darien to the Darien Playhouse. The "Model Block" was the first project undertaken by the Task Force. A combination of private and public investments resulted in a new sidewalk along the Boston Post Road frontage with street lamps, granite curbing, brick pavers, benches and trash receptacles; the establishment of a new Tilley Municipal Parking Lot within the interior of the block; a new rear sidewalk and lighting; improvements to the rear facades of these buildings; and related improvements.

Substantial private action has also been taken to improve the downtown, not the least of which involves the renovation of the Darien Playhouse with its two screens and 528 seats. The building housing the CVS and Boston Market stores has been upgraded as have the stores at Tokeneke Center. Other improvements to downtown business buildings include those at Pedal and Pump, the Compleat Angler, Prudential Realty/Griebs, Arcadia Coffee, TCBY, Coffee Tree, Post Corner Pizza, Four Seasons Too, and Antiques of Darien and Corner Sports. Other operations, such as the Darien Sport Shop, continue to be maintained in a highly superior manner.

The Town's Architectural Review Board (ARB) has also encouraged significant improvements to the downtown's appearance through its program of sign review. The ARB reviews every new sign to determine that it complies with the sign regulations and ARB design standards but even more importantly, that it is attractive and in proper context with the architectural character of the building and its surrounding development.

In total, the past planning period has been a very productive one for the Central Business District. After many decades, it has been clearly recognized that the quality of the downtown

business district contributes to the quality of life in Darien. It is anticipated that required changes and improvements will continue to be implemented. Identified objectives include:

- Increasing the number of amenities, such as pedestrian ways, sitting areas, and upgraded store fronts. Two such examples of possible parklets could be along the stream near Corbin Drive and the corner of Old King's Highway South and Tokeneke Road.
- Removal of derelict sheds, provision of improved landscaped areas, and the preservation of architectural detail.
- Encouraging pedestrian-oriented, retail uses which are intended largely to serve the needs of the residential community. First floor usage shall be retail. General business office and service type uses shall be restricted to the second floor. The definition of "retail use" needs to be better defined in the CBD and DC zones, so that retail stores can work together without the inappropriate intrusion from commercial service type activities more appropriately located in other commercial zones. The CBD is intended to be a good place to do business as well as a good place to shop, eat and have fun with family and friends.
- Establishing more appropriate and flexible design criteria and standards for future new construction, renovation, and additions to existing commercial buildings.
- The continuation of the Task Force on Downtown Improvements Program to work with property owners to replace the entire downtown sidewalk system and improve building facades where necessary. In addition, the Task Force will continue to seek other opportunities to improve upon downtown's amenities.
- Redesign and reconstruction of the municipal parking facilities at Grove Street and Center Street North.
- Better utilization of municipal parking spaces through improvements in permit procedures and the allocation of permit, metered, timed and free parking facilities.

At least two additional opportunities remain for significant expansion of municipal parking facilities. First is the extension of the larger Center Street South lot in a south-westerly direction to incorporate the rear portions of the lots between the Thrift Shop and Corbin Drive. In-filling, reconstruction of buildings and establishment of convenient municipal parking could render this part of the block to be very functional and attractive. A second opportunity involves the corner bounded by the Boston Post Road and Corbin Drive and extending from Fairbanks Photo to the Corbin Building and around to the Post Office. A comprehensive approach, similar to what has been successfully done elsewhere in the downtown, would include the following steps:

- the Planning and Zoning Commission establishes front and rear building lines.
- the Town acquires and/or the individual property owners convey to the Town all land to the rear of the rear building line.
- owners exercise their rights to reconstruct, and expand their buildings and/or their business uses.
- the Town constructs a coordinated municipal parking facility, together with necessary access drives.
- perpendicular parking along the Boston Post Road is eliminated and a pedestrian mall is constructed to the standards of the Task Force on Downtown Improvements.

An alternative to achieving this desired development may be to provide incentives for the private implementation of these or equivalent plans. The objective remains to establish more coordinated and efficient parking facilities which in turn would support more viable business properties.

Figure 7 below shows a conceptual "Boston Post Road and Corbin Drive Development Area" and should clarify further the nature of this opportunity for both the property owners and the downtown alike. Figure 8 illustrates a similar conceptual development of the opposite side of Corbin Drive.

There are also various opportunities for in-fill development between the Darien Playhouse and the train station. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate a potential method for achieving this without adversely affecting the small town character of this area. A well designed series of improvements could make this entire area most attractive and desirable. Figure 10 shows a possible series of improvements for this area. All these improvements are designed to make the downtown a convenient, pedestrian-friendly retail shopping district.

As stated above, it remains the firm policy of the Planning and Zoning Commission that retail use of first floor space be encouraged as strongly as possible with office space or apartments occupying upper floors. Much of this can be achieved by regulation but much can also be accomplished by continuing public/private cooperation, such as working with the Task Force on Downtown Improvements, the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Development Committee. These public and private efforts can accomplish what regulation cannot and that is to achieve diversity of retail businesses and specifically identify certain desirable businesses for inclusion in Darien's downtown. Improving the appearance of some of the commercial properties in the CBD Zone is another area where this kind of effort can be productive.

The small town character of the Town's downtown area has largely been achieved by limiting the maximum height of all commercial structures to two stories or twenty-five feet. A three-story building may be permitted by the Commission only if significant public open spaces or plazas are provided at ground level. Encouraging the preservation and rehabilitation of older structures within the CBD has also helped to maintain Darien's small town flavor.

FIGURE 7.

FIGURE 8.

FIGURE 9.

FIGURE 10.

With the renovation and reopening of the Darien Playhouse and presumably, stronger pedestrian activity in the downtown, the Commission must carefully restudy its zoning regulations with regard to their suitability for current conditions and requirements and incorporate more appropriate standards. For example, the current Zoning Regulations only permit up to eight customer seats in a delicatessen while a restaurant requires a minimum of 800 square feet of customer seating area, with nothing permitted in between. With the changing trends in restaurants, coffee houses and so forth, these kinds of regulatory details merit the Commission's scrutiny. Also, most of the existing regulations were adopted when there was limited municipal parking downtown and certainly that situation has changed in recent years. Reflecting this change, the Commission did amend its parking regulations in 1993 to reduce the on-site parking requirements for restaurants in the CBD Zone to be the same as for retail uses.

As part of this effort to bring new life to the Central Business District and to better reflect contemporary needs, it is recommended that the Zoning Regulations be amended to permit any form of an eating establishment in the CBD subject to the issuance of a Special Permit. Findings made under the Special Permit procedure will specifically prescribe the nature of the permitted use, reflecting such factors as convenience of access, adequacy of parking, relationship to surrounding uses and similar considerations. Parking requirements will be determined in the same manner as for retail uses.

Definitions for retail uses will be refined as necessary and other amendments to the zoning regulations will be made to assure as fully as possible that the dominant first floor use of downtown space is retail.

As stated elsewhere in this section, it is also proposed that ongoing programs to upgrade the CBD's infrastructure, encourage private improvements to individual business properties, and generally improve the downtown will be continued.

Noroton Heights Business Center

Another of Darien's business areas is Noroton Heights Center where retail concentrations are strongly encouraged and supported within the Town. The land use patterns and intensity of development are basically well established within this almost fully developed district and no major modifications are foreseen.

Since the 1984 Town Plan, the Noroton Heights Shopping Center has been renovated, and on-site parking increased. A new 11,400 sq. ft. commercial building with retail on the first floor and business and professional offices on the second floor has been constructed at 40 Heights Road. Also, the former Kerrigan livery stables on Noroton Avenue were renovated into service business type uses.

Regarding land use and land use controls, it is the Commission's policy to more fully emphasize retail areas, uses and activities within this district. Uses requiring outdoor sales and storage space such as gasoline service stations or other automobile-oriented uses will continue to be permitted along both sides of the Noroton Avenue frontage, between West Avenue and Heights Road. The remainder of this shopping district is designated for retail

operations. Offices serving the residential community are permitted only as accessory uses, on the second floors of retail structures, such as in the new commercial building at 40 Heights Road. Separate office structures, housing either executive and administrative offices or business and professional offices are not permitted. This policy is comparable to those policies long applicable to the Central Business District. Generally, the area and configuration of this existing commercially-designated district shall not be expanded or modified, and access of any type shall not be allowed on West Avenue, except at the three existing points at Hollow Tree Ridge Road, Edgerton Street, and Noroton Avenue. It has been concluded that continuing strict adherence to this position is essential to the proper protection of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. It is also imperative that all buffer areas between this shopping district and surrounding residences not only be maintained but improved.

Several changes have occurred in this area over the past decade which assist in providing safer and more convenient access. A flashing light has been installed at West Avenue and Edgerton Street and new bridges have been constructed on Noroton Avenue and Hollow Tree Ridge Road. There is still a need for the completion of sidewalks along Heights Road to its intersection with Noroton Avenue. Additional traffic improvements are set forth on pages 118-120 of this plan.

Service Business Areas

Existing service business districts will be maintained. These include:

- the recently re-zoned Service Business-East district extending along both sides of the Boston Post Road between Birch Road and the Norwalk municipal boundary. This newly-created district provides for improved architectural design together with buffering and landscaping requirements in an effort to enhance the appearance of this section of the Boston Post Road aesthetically. Recent improvements in the SB-E Zone include Bertucci's, Red Lobster, Sandoval's auto repairs, Darien Car Clinic gas station and car wash, and the reconstruction of the Mobil gas station. The commercial properties on the north side of the Boston Post Road must continue to improve the landscaped buffer area and minimize the intrusion of noise, odor or light into the adjoining residential areas. In addition, this district is targeted for improved street tree plantings and other landscaping by the Town. The temporary contractor assembly yard at the Interchange 13 entrance has been removed and should not be allowed to return.

Other Service Business districts occur at:

- both sides of the Boston Post Road between the Connecticut Turnpike overpass and Cross Road on the easterly side and to Hecker Avenue on the westerly side.
- the existing commercial district on West Avenue in the vicinity of Herman Avenue and extending across the railroad to Ledge Road.
- both sides of Noroton Avenue between West Avenue and the railroad.

- the area on the northerly side of Ledge Road, adjacent to the Central Business District. Special Permits were granted that allowed two hotels to be constructed in this zone. The zoning regulations should be amended to allow as additional Special Permit uses an “independent living facility and an assisted living facility.” Given the overbuilding of hotel rooms in this region and the reduced demand for transient hotel space and the unique nature of this site, the conversion of one of these dated hotel facilities into transitional housing that provides various levels of service to its elderly occupants would be consistent with this Plan.

These service business areas are vitally needed to serve the local community. They provide automobile sales and service facilities; businesses requiring outdoor storage and sales yards such as a garden center or lumber yard; veterinary hospitals; fuel sales yards; motels; and various types of restaurants. Each of the listed areas has an established development pattern based on these uses.

The total land area within Darien allocated to this Service Business category has been decreased dramatically since 1964. At that time, there were 78.5 acres of the Town's land designated for this district. The 1984 Plan reflected a deliberate decision to protect the approximately 50 acres remaining as the minimum area needed to adequately provide for the Town's service business requirements. No decreases have occurred since that time and this new Plan continues to support that decision.

Neighborhood Business (NB) Zone

The Neighborhood Business (NB) Zone has long been the most restrictive commercial zone in Darien because of its unique proximity to adjoining residential areas, the small size of this zone, the small scale of existing development, the historic features within the zone and in one case the presence of three churches in or adjacent to the zone. Three Neighborhood Business zones exist. The largest is Noroton Center which extends along the Boston Post Road from Noroton Avenue to Ring's End Road. The other two are on Tokeneke Road near Rowayton and on Noroton Avenue at its intersection with Maple Street. Any future commercial uses must be compatible with the character of the immediate neighborhood and shall principally serve the local residential neighborhood.

Designed Business One (DB-1) and Designed Business Two (DB-2) Zones

The Designed Business One Zone is along the Boston Post Road from Sedgwick Avenue to Brookside Road and in the area of Grove Street, Clock Hill Homes and Middlesex Commons on Leroy Avenue. This zone was first established in 1981 along the Boston Post Road and was intended to be a transitional business zone between the CBD and the residential zones on the periphery of that center. Special measures were included in this zone to protect and preserve the special character of this area. A modest floor area ratio, flexible setback requirements, and design standards aimed at enhancing and maintaining the historic and architectural character of the area were all intended to encourage the adaptive-reuse of the existing nineteenth century buildings, which are included on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of these former residential structures are now used as professional offices.

The Designed Business Two Zone is along the Boston Post Road from Brookside to Birch Road. This zone has similar design criteria as the DB-1 Zone, but with slightly modified area and bulk requirements. Since 1981 four office buildings have been constructed at 381, 397, 484, and 528 Boston Post Road and 58 condominium units at Villager Pond and Darien Close. Future development in this zone needs to increase front landscaped areas, minimize the number of curb cuts, improve signage and incorporate sidewalks and street trees into site plans. In addition, it would be appropriate to amend the Zoning Regulations to provide for better protection of the approximately 15 legally non-conforming retail uses within this district. This will enable the individual property owners to make further investments in their businesses with an assurance that current conditions may be continued. A priority area in this zone for development is in the area of Oberlander Lane. The adjoining residential area and watercourse will necessitate an appropriate use with a sensitive site plan.

Designed Office and Research (DOR) Zones

Over the past 20 years, the southwestern portion of Fairfield County, including Darien has witnessed an explosion of office development, which has caused the severe traffic problems now facing this area. For all intents and purposes, virtually every square foot of potential Executive and Administrative offices has been developed in Darien. It has been, and will continue to be the Commission's policy to maintain the current pattern and scale of development of Executive and Administrative office development as it now exists. This is in accordance with SWRPA's regional development policy with respect to Darien, where non-residential development is envisioned to have a localized "Town Center" function in the Region.

Approximately one quarter of the existing Executive and Administrative Office space was vacant in 1995. Recent experience in the area has demonstrated that the nature of the occupancy of these types of facilities is changing from the one or two larger "headquarters" type of tenant to several smaller sized tenants. The Commission continues to adhere to its policy of distinguishing between Executive and Administrative offices and Business and Professional offices. The DOR Zone, due primarily to locations adjoining residential areas, is designed to be used by central administrative or headquarters types of operations with parking used on a non-transient basis. Business and professional offices which primarily provide goods and services to the local population are permitted in several other more appropriate business districts. While it is the Town's obligation to address changing requirements, special care must be taken to protect residential neighborhoods.

While all of Darien's business districts are largely developed, it can be anticipated that demands for change and intensification of use will continue. Accordingly, definitive actions must be taken to direct this activity in a manner consistent with the best interests of the Town and its policies.

Proposed Objectives for Commercial Development

- Expand and improve the regulatory process on commercial development by:
 - Adopting those standards and regulations required to achieve Darien's objectives on business development.
 - Constantly seeking to facilitate the application procedures. This includes timing requirements, needed application materials and related matters.
 - Continuing to provide coordinated technical review and assistance to potential applicants.
 - Continually considering changes to the land use regulations to create a more "user friendly" approval process in an effort to continue to improve the business climate in Darien.
- Take steps to retain the existing business districts and the existing scale of business development while improving the viability and appearance of commercial areas.
- Continually monitor and take steps to improve management of the municipal parking system in the Central Business District.
- Provide for public amenities such as parklets, pedestrian features such as new sidewalks and benches, public signposts for local, non-profit activities, municipal parking and regular municipal and private cleaning and maintenance within all commercial zones.
- Focus business development policies on those business uses and activities which serve and support the shopping and commercial needs of the residential community.
- Continually attempt to establish improved buffer areas between commercial and residential districts.
- Establish a sidewalk map, identifying where the Town desires to see the construction of new sidewalks in Darien's commercial zones, to enhance pedestrian safety and use. New sidewalks should be constructed when a property is being developed to connect with this sidewalk system.
- Continue to review restaurant parking requirements in the CBD Zone so as to encourage the increase in restaurants within this district.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Planning for open space and recreation needs is an important element in planning for the Town of Darien's future, particularly since opportunities for open space acquisition are limited. The preservation and acquisition of open space lands and recreational facilities are key elements in determining the character of a community, and certainly in the community of Darien.

The term "open space" is considered to include the following classifications of land:

- public parks and preserve areas,
- private recreation facilities,
- lands owned by semi-public and public organizations for open space purposes,
- lands set aside for park and open space purposes as part of the subdivision process,
- portions of school properties used for recreational facilities or left in a natural state,
- lands protected by conservation easements which restrict the use and development of the property to passive recreation or unaltered natural conditions,
- tidal and inland wetlands.

Functions of Open Space

Open space serves three important functions within a community:

1. the provision of recreational opportunities,
2. the establishment of community appearance and design which enhances environmental amenities, and
3. the maintenance of natural processes or conservation.

Preserving certain critical areas in their natural state can be important to maintaining the ground water supply and avoiding flood hazards; it is also much less expensive than providing man-made facilities for water supply and drainage. The preservation of natural vegetation on steep slopes can also prevent erosion problems and help protect water quality.

Recreational lands in Darien range from active recreational sites such as McGuane Field to natural passive recreational areas such as Woodland Park and the combination of active and passive recreational uses found at Cherry Lawn Park. Private recreation facilities, particularly the three country clubs, make a very significant contribution both to open space and to the total range of recreation available in the Town, as described below.

Community appearance is primarily established along the major roadways in a town. These views of a community as seen from the roadside either establish or remove a sense of natural environment or feeling of openness. A sense of compatibility between developed areas and the natural environment can be established if the appropriate regulations on land use are in place. Open space edges and borders can serve to enclose and define development and prevent a continuous unattractive sprawl. The maintenance of green belts along roads and stream corridors is particularly useful in this regard. In the past, private choice and natural features which pose severe development limitations rather than public land ownership or protection measures have limited development along many of Darien's major roadways. However, in some cases very deliberate action has resulted in the preservation of Darien's roadside character. For example, along the easterly side of Mansfield Avenue opposite and north of its intersection with Middlesex Road, the approvals of two, contiguous Conservation Subdivisions have resulted in the permanent protection of the "green" roadside character. These two conservation subdivisions, known as Keewaydin Hilltop and Mansfield Green, have involved the establishment of deed-restricted greenbelts on the easterly Mansfield frontage, which range in depth from 80 feet to more than 200 feet. In addition, the Mansfield Green action also stipulated that the property's entire frontage on Salisbury Road be preserved in its natural state. Other conservation subdivisions such as Rock Spring Lane, Middlesex Farms and Bouton Lane have achieved similar preservation of open space for the benefit of the entire Town.

The preservation of open space is, to a large degree, the preservation of the character of a suburban community such as Darien. Open space, if included as a major design component in town development, can provide for the continuance of a connection between the natural environment and the people of the Town. Open space preservation must take place while

there is still open space to preserve. Just as the local planning process anticipates future needs for schools, it must also anticipate future needs for open space and recreational lands.

Existing Open Space and Recreation Facilities

Darien contains approximately 1,000 acres of open space and recreational lands or more than 10 per cent of the total land area. This includes public parks and recreation, private recreation, permanent open space, public school play areas and conservation easements. Some 213 acres are Town-owned active and passive recreation lands, up from 182 acres in 1984 and 140 acres in 1965.

Based on a comparison of the 1982 and 1993 land use surveys, there has not been any appreciable change in the private recreation acreage. There has, however, been a marked increase in the amount of conservation land. Some 140 acres are now preserved by the Land Trust of Darien and the Town of Darien. In addition, another 52 acres are protected by conservation restrictions.

As stated, open space is one of the various means by which the community's beauty can be preserved and further enhanced. That is, it is a way in which the attractive scenic features, which continue to draw people to Darien, can be maintained in their natural state, and the uncrowded feeling of Darien retained.

photo here

**TABLE 13.
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE LANDS**

	<u>ACRES</u>
Town-owned Lands	
Active Recreation Fields and Parks	94.7
Passive Recreation Parks & Wildlife Area	118.6
TOTAL:	213.3
Conservation Lands	
Land Trust of Darien	128
Designated Open Space	27.5
TOTAL:	155.5
Private Outdoor Recreation	519.3
Conservation Easements	51.5+
Public School Play Fields	
<i>Darien High School</i>	28.0
<i>Middlesex Middle School</i>	12.0
<i>Ox Ridge Elementary School</i>	3.0
<i>Royle Elementary School</i>	3.0
<i>Tokeneke Elementary School</i>	6.0
<i>Hindley Elementary School</i>	3.6
<i>Holmes Elementary School</i>	4.0
TOTAL:	59.6
GRAND TOTAL:	999.2

Town Parks and Facilities

The Town has a number of facilities for both active and passive recreational use. These include:

Pear Tree Beach, 7.95 Acres, Acquired 1873

Total shore access 889', front beach - swimming 323', back beach -swimming 292', picnic grove, gazebo, gate house, boat launch ramp with float, 223 parking spaces, bathhouse - showers, restrooms, concession, planted areas, planter boxes, and water fountain. Dedicated parkland, Darien Boat Club adjoins beach.

Weed Beach, 22.12 Acres, Acquired 1953, 1976

Total shore access 1707', front beach - swimming 490', back beach - small craft and launch area 320', windsurf/optimist launch areas (2), picnic grove area, 6 tennis courts, basketball court, open lawn area, 1 concrete backboard, trees, planted areas, islands, planter boxes, bathhouse - showers, concession, restrooms, security apartment building, 2 sailing cold storage buildings, 5 paddle courts (lights), 250+ parking spaces, bandstand in summer, 2 children's playground areas, 2 optimist outdoor storage racks, 1 gate house, and water fountain. Dedicated parkland. Park Master Plan should evaluate better usage of adjoining Sewer Commission property and relocation of residence on Short Lane.

McGuane Park, 4 Acres, Acquired 1953

Two Little League Fields, parking, open lawn areas, water fountains, restroom building, cold storage buildings, concession stand, and access roadway. Park Master Plan should explore possibility of acquiring property from Lions Club to establish third baseball field.

Stony Brook Park, 11.3 Acres, Acquired 1955

Hiking trails, waterfall, benches, and limited parking. Recent construction project undertaken by State has disturbed site, which now needs to be returned to its former condition.

Frate Park, 0.83 Acres, Acquired 1958

Ornamental plantings, shrubs, trees, grassy lawn area and memorial plaque.

Woodland Park, 64.717 Acres, Acquired 1960

Extensive trail system including step-ways, bridges, 2 entrances, 2 field areas, 2 ponds, ornamental plantings and trees. Limited parking. This dedicated parkland is well used by the public in the most densely populated area of the Town.

Selleck's Woods, 28.093 Acres, Acquired 1963

Extensive trail system, 3 entrances from Parklands Drive, Fairmead, and Little Brook. Adjacent to Land Trust Dunlop's Woods parcel of 20.1 acres. Limited parking. This open space serves as an important natural buffer between the Turnpike and intensive non-residential and residential uses.

Tilley Park, 8.651 Acres, Acquired 1971

2.75 acre pond, sedimentation pond, stone hut with fireplace, open lawn areas, weir, spillway, walking/jogging paths, benches, garden area, trees, and ornamental plantings. Dedicated parkland. Adjacent to municipal parking facilities providing convenient access.

Baker Field and Woods, 11.72 Acres, Acquired 1973 (School Closing)

Multi-purpose baseball/soccer field, hiking trails, streams, open lawn areas, water fountain, children's playground area, trees and ornamental shrubs, plantings. Limited parking. Dedicated parkland.

Cherry Lawn Park, 27.5 Acres, Acquired 1973

Nature Center/Youth Options/apartment building, 5 tennis courts, small pond with dock, multi-use field (Casey Field), nature trails, 2 children's playground areas, water fountain, basketball court, community gardens (90), softball field, picnic areas, ornamental shrubs, plantings, trees, and 55 parking spaces. Given the significant increase in usage, enforcement of Darien park permits is now needed. This parkland needs to be formally dedicated and Casey Field enlarged.

Town Hall & Holahan Fields, 11.5 Acres, Acquired 1985 (School Closing)

Two softball fields/multi-use areas in front and one Babe Ruth Baseball Field in rear. In 1986 Town acquired 1.5 acre adjoining parcel for softball field expansion area and potential picnic area.

Diller Property, 5 Acres, Acquired 1989

Adjacent to High School - Wooded - Acquired for future recreational use, no specific planned use at this time.

Hollow Tree, 4 Acres.

The Darien Senior Center was formerly Hollow Tree Elementary School. It is still surrounded by 2.5 acres of playing fields and woodland. These playing fields should either be incorporated into the Middlesex Middle School playing fields or the Park and Recreation Commission should assume responsibility for the proper maintenance of these playing fields.

Future Recreational Needs in Town

These 213.3 acres of Town parks and recreational lands have experienced tremendous increases in use during the past few years. Permits issued and fees received more than confirm this. There has been an increase in recreational uses such as family and group picnics. The changing composition of Darien's population, i.e. young families, is dramatically changing demands and requirements. Adult programs, such as tennis are filled to capacity and both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities are overtaxed. Requirements for playfield use far exceed what is currently available.

In December 1993, the Advisory Committee on Recreational Space appointed by the Board of Selectmen, issued the following report:

After review of the surveys submitted to the Advisory Committee on Recreational Space from users of the Town's recreational facilities and after meeting with key representatives of the users, the Committee reached the following conclusions:

1. Most all responding groups state they are or will be in need of additional fields to accommodate their programs. This includes practice as well as game fields.
2. Some groups note that the fields they are currently using are not in the best possible condition.
3. Youth sport leagues dominate use of current facility inventory leaving no room for growth or expansion of those leagues or of adult programs/leagues. Due to this high level of use, it also seems any new adult or youth program cannot be accommodated. According to the Town-wide census, the 35-44 age group and 20-34 age group are the second and third largest behind the 0-9 age group. Additional facilities are needed for activities for both youth and adult sports.
4. It appears activity and facility scheduling for male only programs far surpass the use of current inventory over female programs. The reasons for this could be many, i.e. lack of solid organizations to lack of current interest. Since the Town-wide census shows a close number of males vs. females in the youth age brackets, it is logical to assume the female activities will grow, therefore, must be accommodated.
5. Elementary school buildings may offer the opportunity for expanding after-hours use by other youth and adult-age activity groups. As community assets, all school facilities are accessible to interested and qualified residents on a planned and organized basis.

The Advisory Committee on Recreational Space makes the following recommendations:

1. A master plan for the use of Town-wide open space is overdue and needed. This should include recognizing immediate problems, needs and solutions as well as long term projections and plans.
2. Current open space that is not in the best possible condition should be improved, updated, maintained and scheduled to gain maximum use and to insure safety of all users. This includes, but should not be limited to:

Holmes School
Hollow Tree School/Senior Center grounds

Areas which may be expanded or developed to proper dimensioned areas are:

Casey Field, Cherry Lawn Park
Baker Field, Baker Park

3. Some possible methods to alleviate overuse on current field inventory could include:
 - a. Acquisition or conversion of suitable open space.
 - b. Encourage user support to address current field improvements and/or expansion plans by the groups currently using the areas. Examples: Little League's capital improvement at McGuane Field.
 - c. Consideration be given to the addition of irrigation and drainage systems for improved maintenance and where appropriate, lights for existing areas in order to allow more games per day, per facility.
4. Key recommendations and use for the 1993 School Building Committee include the following:
 - a. The School Building Committee should investigate ways to sequester the gym and adjacent restroom facilities in each building. This may be achieved through the strategic placement of folding gates. Such a measure would improve building security (and perhaps reduce associated custodial costs).
 - b. The use of other school rooms should be explored and encouraged.

The importance of undertaking a master plan for the Town's recreational facilities cannot be over-emphasized. For example, it should be considered that the 1984 Plan recommended that a master plan be prepared for the Cherry Lawn property since, at that time, the best uses of that public property were basically unknown. Following the completion of the master development plan, and much public discussion, this park area has been developed and evolved from being a totally under-utilized property to being one of the most heavily used park facilities within the Town. The current investment being made in such a master planning program for the Town's entire park system will hopefully be most beneficial to meeting the shortcomings currently being experienced. Once the master plan has been adopted by the Parks and Recreation Commission it shall be incorporated as an appendix to this Town Plan of Development.

Private Recreation

Private recreation lands are not only responsible for many of the recreational opportunities in Darien, but also provide much of the open space in the Town and contribute significantly to the visual character of Darien. Private recreation lands include:

Wee Burn Country Club, 204.5 Acres

Clubhouse, accessory buildings (3 pro shops, golf course snack bar), maintenance complex (4 buildings), golf course, 8 tennis courts, 6 platform tennis courts, skeet range, 190 parking spaces

Woodway Country Club, 140.5 Acres

Clubhouse, accessory buildings (property manager's residence, pool house, maintenance building, caddy house, gun house), golf course, 6 tennis courts, 4 platform tennis courts, swimming pool, 200+ parking spaces

Darien Country Club, 138.8 Acres

Clubhouse, accessory buildings (golf shop, pool house, maintenance building, caddy house), golf course, pool, curling rink, 8 tennis courts, 4 platform tennis courts, 300 parking spaces.

Ox Ridge Hunt Club, 36.8 Acres

Clubhouse, barn, indoor riding ring, accessory buildings (staff house, grooms quarters, blacksmith shop, polo barn), polo field, polo practice field, 2 jumper rings, dressage ring, 4 platform tennis courts, 40+ parking spaces plus use of fields.

Tokeneke Beach Club, 15.5 Acres

Clubhouse, accessory buildings (bath house, tennis house, cabanas, staff house), beach, swimming pool, 9 tennis courts, dock with float, 143 parking spaces

Noroton Yacht Club, 2.5 Acres

Clubhouse, 310' long pier with floats, beach, boat moorings, 2 tennis courts and practice court, 47 parking spaces.

Darien Boat Club

Clubhouse, 1150' of floats for 246 slips, several moorings, fuel dock, 223 municipal parking spaces (Pear Tree Beach).

Middlesex Swimming Club, 10.0 Acres

Clubhouse, swimming pool, 8 tennis courts, 4 platform tennis courts, 100 parking spaces.

YMCA, 7.3 Acres

Central facility with meeting rooms, 2 swimming pools, gym, weight room, nautilus room, racquet ball and squash courts, dock, 126 parking spaces.

Kings Highway Tennis Club, 2.4 Acres

Clubhouse with pro shop and 6 indoor tennis courts, 48 parking spaces.

Darien Ice Rink, 5.2 Acres

Indoor ice rink with locker rooms, snack bar, pro shop, accessory rooms, 75 parking spaces.

Open Space Standards

In order to guide public and private organizations when making decisions with regard to how much open space is needed or desirable, a number of planning organizations have formulated open space standards and guidelines. These standards represent an effort to make generalizations about the supply of open space that is needed for various purposes by a population of a given size. In most cases, they are expressed in terms of acres per 1,000 population.

Table 14 contains examples of open space standards developed by governmental agencies and private organizations. The range in standards is due in part to the lack of precise definitions of open space lands.

TABLE 14.
OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Total Acres of Open Space Per 1,000 Pop.</u>	<u>Open Space Components Per 1,000 Population</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Source</u>
Regional Plan Association (RPA)	---	County Park	10 acres or 5% of total (which ever is greater)	<u>2nd Regional Plan</u> (1968)
RPA and Metropolitan Regional Council	---	Municipal Park	10 acres+	
		Parkland	22 acres	---
Tri-State Regional Planning Commission	---	Large-scale regional Neighborhood	15 acres 12 acres	---
Tri-State Regional Planning Commission	---	Outdoor Recreation	30 acres	<u>Outdoor Recreation in a Crowded Region</u> (1973)
National Recreation and Park Association	21.25 - 30.5	Local/Close-to-Home Space Regional Space	6.25 - 10.5 acres 15 - 20 acres	<u>Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines</u> (1983)
Clawson's Standard Baltimore, Md.	78	Regional Open Space Public Park and Recreation Private Park Green Space	42 acres 14 acres 5 acres 17 acres	<u>Challenge of the Land</u> Charles E. Little (1983)
Connecticut Inter-regional Planning Program	70	Outdoor recreation Other	20 acres 50 acres	---
South Western Regional Planning Agency	65	Local parks Intermunicipal parks State parks	15 acres 20 acres 30 acres	(1970)

TABLE 15.
SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY
OPEN SPACE INVENTORY BY MUNICIPALITY 1980 (Acres)

Source: South Western Regional Planning Agency, Open Space Report - 1980;
Stewardship in the South Western Region.

Darien currently has a total of 56.5 acres of open space per thousand of population, including private recreation lands. This figure places the Town in approximately the middle of the range. However, if only the 213 acres of Town-owned parks are considered, the figure is a low 11.7 acres per thousand.

A comparative analysis of current open space in the southwestern region communities is shown in Table 15. It highlights Darien's dependence upon private open space to meet its recreation needs. Darien is below the regional mean in all of the categories shown. It has the second lowest percentage of both "land area in public open space" and "land area in public and private open space." Only Norwalk has fewer acres of public open space per thousand of population. Darien has the third lowest ratio of public and private open space per thousand of population.

Open Space Preservation

In order for Darien to keep up with its open space requirements, the Town should be prepared not only to protect its existing open space lands but also to add to them. There are many techniques available to do this. Several are already in use and have proven to be quite effective; others could be improved or added. By having a variety of preservation techniques at its disposal, Darien will have the maximum ability to develop and maintain an open space system which meets the needs and desires of the community. The techniques currently in use include the following:

- Subdivision Regulations - In most subdivisions in Darien, a minimum of 10 percent of the aggregate area of the subdivision tract must be preserved as permanent open space. The use of this land is generally limited to conservation, scenic or buffer purposes. The reservation of land in its natural state can be most effective when it either preserves an important natural feature, such as a wetland, or serves as a visual buffer and open space linkage along a road. It is also desirable to preserve land adjacent to existing active or passive open spaces.
- Conservation Subdivision Development - Conservation subdivision development is encouraged in Darien through the Zoning Regulations. The basic concept of conservation development is to limit density to the same number of dwelling units which the Planning and Zoning Commission determines could be built on a property in accordance with all applicable requirements of zoning and other regulations, but allowing these dwelling units to be clustered together in such a way as to permanently preserve important scenic, historical or ecological features, and to achieve other site design benefits. Successful conservation subdivisions include: Middlesex Farm, Rock Spring Lane, Mansfield Green, Kewaydin Hilltop, and Bouton Lane.
- Private Conservation Organizations - The Land Trust of Darien has been a particularly important force in open space preservation in Darien having preserved some 140 acres through either direct acquisition (approximately 128 acres) or conservation easements (approximately 12 acres). They are primarily interested in acquiring areas of natural beauty, ecological significance and importance as wildlife habitats. Additional properties abutting currently - owned

Land Trust lands are most preferred. Recent land acquisitions by the Land Trust include: 3.5 acres adjacent to Cherry Lawn Park; two parcels on Circle Road totalling over 2 acres; a 13 acre parcel on Heather Lane; and a 3 acre parcel on Old Kings Highway North.

- Town Acquisition - The outright purchase of land by the Town is the most direct method of creating an open space system. Any such acquisition should be carefully planned to preserve the most environmentally sensitive lands, or extend existing open space or recreational facilities. Since 1984 the Dana and Diller properties were purchased to provide additional recreational fields. The Town should seriously consider acquiring the Procaccini property and property adjacent to Town parks and schools for recreational uses.
- Conservation Easement - An easement is a right in land that is less than full ownership and may be granted in perpetuity or for a specified period. These are generally used in Darien as negative easements which preclude any change to the land, i.e. open space preservation and to protect environmentally sensitive land.
- The Role of Philanthropy in Open Space Preservation - The active solicitation of donations of land to a private trust or a municipality is an increasingly popular and successful open space implementation device for property owner and municipality alike.
- Public Act 490 - Under the provisions of Connecticut Public Act 490, lands shown on a Town's Comprehensive Plan Map as open space may be taxed at a lower rate based on current use rather than at a rate reflecting the land's highest and best use. This tax abatement is currently being applied to the Darien Country Club, Woodway Country Club, Wee Burn Country Club and the Ox Ridge Hunt Club.

Other Preservation Techniques

In addition to the techniques and processes discussed above, the following strategies for open space preservation and natural resource management may be appropriate in specific situations.

- First Refusal Options - A first refusal option is the right to purchase a parcel before it is released for public sale in the event that a decision is made by an owner to sell the parcel. Holding a first refusal option could be of great value to the Town if it was decided that some control over the disposition of properties now held for private recreation purposes would be useful in implementing the Town Plan. For example, private recreation lands are shown on the Town Plan Map because they serve as a part of the Town-wide open space system and therefore, their preservation is of importance to the town. If the Town elects to pursue this approach, it would need to begin securing such options now.
- Leasebacks and Salebacks - In a leaseback procedure, the land is acquired and controlled but not necessarily occupied by the owner. For example, the Town

could acquire specific tracts of land to be preserved and then lease them back to private persons for use under defined open space purposes.

In the case of salebacks, the land would be purchased by the Town and resold with restrictions attached to ensure that the open space resources of the site are properly protected. From the Town's viewpoint, this approach provides a strong measure of control over these properties as well as assurances regarding their environmental protection. Moreover, such a strategy could be carried out at little or no net cost to the Town.

- Visual Corridor Easements - Much of what one perceives as open space are edges of land viewed from an automobile while driving through a community. The maintenance of narrow, natural buffers along Darien's major roadways would preserve the current open space ambience. These buffers are sometimes effectively preserved through the use of conservation easements combined with careful subdivision design. An example of where the Town has applied visual easements is the approval of the subdivision of the Rivoire (Ziegler) property. Key views of Long Island Sound from the public roadways are protected by such easements.

Open Space Objectives and Policies

The overall thrust of the 1984 Town Plan with respect to open space and recreation was to provide for active recreation lands and for the preservation of natural areas to maintain Darien's character. Some of the specific objectives, particularly those relating to the acquisition of substantial tracts of open space by the Town will become even more difficult with time as the number of potential sites diminishes and the cost increases. Accordingly, Darien must concentrate its energies on: (1) acquiring those few sites still available for open space; (2) guarding the integrity of the natural environment; and (3) preserving the open space and recreation lands which presently exist in the Town, regardless of their current ownership.

To this end, the following policies are recommended:

1. Areas of ecological importance such as streams, water bodies, wetlands (both tidal and freshwater), aquifers, steep slopes, and valuable wildlife areas should be preserved. Strict and rigorous application of environmental protection regulations should be a major means of maintaining and protecting natural resources important to the community which are not otherwise protected.
2. Development must be reasonably related to the land carrying capacity without creating harmful and unnecessary environmental impacts. Where sites have environmental limitations, appropriate designs should normally result in a lower density of development.
3. Lands currently serving open space and recreation purposes, including playing fields, regardless of ownership, should be permanently preserved to the

maximum extent practicable. For example, if any of the private clubs in the Town were offered for sale, the Town should be prepared to acquire this irreplaceable open space or apply whatever actions are necessary to assure their preservation.

4. In order to retain the appearance of an open, New England residential community, the visual character of Darien should be preserved by continuing the strategic preservation of open space along major roads in the Town.

The Open Space System

To act as a guide for the implementation of the above policies, a large scale overlay Open Space Plan map has been prepared as part of this Plan update. It shows lands currently in open space or recreational use as well as areas which should be preserved in order to create a linked open space system throughout the Town. These areas include:

1. Lands which are integral parts of natural systems such as stream corridors and their associated wetlands, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas, and floodplains;
2. Lands serving an important aesthetic function such as areas along major roads, highly visible natural areas and greenbelts serving to break up a continuous pattern of development; and
3. Potential recreation lands and lands linking existing and future recreation lands.

Plan Proposals and Implementation Measures

This analysis has suggested that consideration be given to several measures and the Plan makes the following proposals for implementation:

1. Acquisition of Open Space - The Town should explore the strategic acquisition of specific parcels to maintain and expand existing park and recreation lands, such as:

Procaccini Parcel - 15 acres of open level ground for playing fields or other municipal uses. The Town currently owns an accessway to this parcel off Camp Avenue. This site was identified in the 1967 Town Plan as a potential future school site and also represents the Town's best opportunity for open space acquisition.

Holmes School - purchase the residence adjacent to the school to improve the parking facilities, establish a playing field behind the residence and to expand the site.

Ox Ridge School - consider acquiring adjoining residences to the east for playing fields or to improve access and parking facilities.

Middlesex Middle School - acquire the 0.9 acre residence to the north of this school for expansion of the playing fields.

Woodland Park - continue to pursue the acquisition of the 1.55 acre undeveloped parcel in the southwest corner of this park having frontage on West Avenue.

Weed Beach - explore the possibility of either acquiring or swapping land to incorporate a residence on Short Lane into the beach area.

Other possible parcels to be acquired could be lots providing access to Coons Cove; the western portion of Plumfield School for a public picnic area or a residence on Purdy Lane to provide access to Holly Pond.

2. Officially dedicate as park land Cherry Lawn Park and any other Town-owned land not previously dedicated which is currently serving a park and/or recreation function.
3. The recreation function of school playing fields should be maintained and permanently preserved as fully as is practicable.
4. The Town should seek to obtain right of first refusal options and/or arrange saleback or leaseback agreements to protect important private open space sites.
5. Priority land preserved as open space as part of the subdivision process should be that which either protects natural systems or preserves visual character.
6. Preserve the off-shore islands such as the Fish Islands as permanent open space.
7. Acquire or permanently protect undeveloped shore frontage land along Gorhams and Holly Ponds.
8. Small open space areas or parklets should be developed in the business center, as was done in the area between the Boston Market store and the adjacent restaurant, or the area in front of the Darien Center municipal parking area adjacent to the Darien Fire Department. New parklets could be at the corner of Old King's Highway South and Tokeneke Road or along the stream near Corbin Drive.
9. A bikeway system was established in the Town during the 1970's and runs generally along major streets signed with the bike trail markers. This system is currently limited and needs to be re-established and possibly extended and improved following discussion with and specific recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission.
10. Public funds and resources should be reserved for the maintenance and improvement of Town-owned neighborhood parks.
11. Project development plans should be prepared for each of the major Town-owned properties, and adopted and implemented by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Such adopted plans shall become appendices to this Plan.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

It is the policy of the Town to conserve and protect its natural resources. This includes the land, water, wetlands, marshes, ponds and lakes, streams and watercourses, shoreline and coastal lands and rivers and tidal estuaries. These Town policies are consistent with the objectives of the flood damage prevention, protection of inland wetlands and watercourses, aquifers, and the Coastal Area Management Act.

Rivers and Streams

Where rivers and streams have been dammed, extensive sedimentation is currently being experienced. The Town continues to protect and preserve these rivers and streams in their natural state by establishing river buffers. It continues to be a high priority of the Town to protect against encroachments within flood plains and construction of structures or land filling activities that increase water velocities.

The establishment of wider controlled areas surrounding major wetlands, streams and waterbodies, i.e. up to 100 feet, should be investigated. Wherever possible, methods to naturally slow and retain storm water runoff and flood water should be explored.

Aquifers

It is important to prevent contamination to aquifers by controlling land use activities above their recharge areas. Protection of the primary and secondary recharge areas is particularly important. Any land use which would result in solid waste leachate, road salt, petroleum, or waste percolating into groundwater should be strictly controlled and, if possible, prohibited in aquifer recharge areas. It is also important to keep these areas open so that the aquifer can be recharged.

The establishment of an aquifer protection ordinance should be considered.

Coastal Resources

Consideration of coastal problems and issues, the nature and location of coastal resources, and future water dependent development opportunities which exist within the coastal boundaries are an integral part of Darien's planning for open space and recreation. Fifteen principal issues of coastal management have been identified by the Commission. These include:

1. *Improvement of Boating Opportunities* - Darien currently has two public sites where Long Island Sound is accessible to its boating residents, at Weed Beach and at Pear Tree Point Beach. Needs for additional launching and docking facilities for small craft have been identified, and it has become Town policy that this long range objective will be pursued with the appropriate Federal and

State agencies. In accordance with the Town's Coastal Area Management Program and the 1984 Plan, the Darien Boat Club's facilities were dredged and the boating capacity improved in 1991.

The long range objectives of the Commission include continuing to improve the capacity and safety of the Darien Harbor; maintaining an anchorage control system for the area of shoreline near Sargent's Cove in order to protect it from over-use and abuse from temporary mooring activities; and improvement of the regulatory procedures governing the construction of individual docks, in order that coastal resources may be best protected.

Inasmuch as the Town is not the permitting agency for activities such as dredging along its coastline, the Town becomes a conduit between individual applicants for construction or dredging and the appropriate permitting agency, such as was the case with the Darien Boat Club. In most cases this involves the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Commonly, individual property owners are not aware of the permit requirements, and the Town can aid in making these requirements clear.

2. Coastal Hazards/Flood Damage - In order to reduce the potential for loss of life and/or property, the policies guiding land use and development in coastal flood hazard areas have been established following consideration of coastal flooding and erosion patterns.

Flood hazard boundary areas have been determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Much of Darien lies in areas which have been identified as potentially being subject to flooding. For Darien, however, the policies and regulations established under the Zoning Regulations should be continued in order to protect future development from risking potential flood damage. Further, it should be noted that much of the Darien coastal area has already been committed to a permanent residential use. Future development and modification of existing development should be directed towards minimizing any future flood damage potential.

3. Preservation and Enhancement of Tidal Wetlands - Much of the success of coastal area management in Darien depends on public education as to the proposed qualities and importance of coastal areas. The means, processes and purposes of regulated activities in the coastal area and in tidal wetlands should be made clear. As noted elsewhere, the deposition of organic materials or the denuding of shoreline will not be effectively controlled by enforcement alone but rather through informed and environmentally concerned property owners.

In addition, in order to truly preserve and enhance existing tidal wetlands, any activities which might be permitted in the tidal wetlands should utilize "state of the art" construction techniques that will minimize disturbance of the wetland area and maximize its protection. Where wetlands areas have been

damaged or destroyed, the potential and procedures for their restoration should be fully explored.

The Commission has identified the following tidal wetlands which should be permanently preserved if at all possible through the use of conservation easements, open space declaration or other similar means:

- a. Five Mile River Shoreline
- b. Tokeneke Beach Club Marsh
- c. Tokeneke Trail Marsh
- d. Contentment Island Marsh
- e. Delafield Island Marsh
- f. Darien Harbor Marsh
- g. Holly Pond Marsh

4. Maintenance of Recreational Shellfish Opportunities and Establishment of Commercial Oystering Policy - Limited commercial and recreational shell fishing opportunities already exist within the Town. However, working with the Aquaculture Division of the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture, the Town should establish a management plan for their recreational shellfish resources including three basic objectives:

- a. Assessing the size of the resource and its quality,
- b. Establishing management techniques to enhance and expand it, and
- c. Determining the appropriate regulatory measures to insure its continued protection and viability.

Existing open recreational shellfish areas are located in Scotts Cove. Further, it is a policy of the Coastal Management Program in Darien to investigate the potential for establishing additional recreational shellfish areas which have suitable public access, such as off Weed Beach.

5. Local Policies on Dredging New and Existing Navigation Channels - As noted above, the Town is not the final permit agency. Even so, the Town should fine tune its own local policies on areas that should not be dredged and that should be permanently preserved. Areas where channels exist should be maintained by periodic dredging. Otherwise, dredging should be limited.
6. Protection and Enhancement of Wildlife Habitats - Through the inventory of Darien's coastal resources, the Commission has identified areas of unusual

habitat quality which are numerous and varied throughout the Town's coastline. It is the policy of the Commission that through the protection and the enhancement of these tidal wetlands, shellfish beds and mudflats, measures can be taken to improve habitat for a variety of wild and marine life. Such habitat can truly be regarded as a cultural resource of the Town.

7. Project Analyses and Proposals for Specific Coastal Areas- Over the course of time, various natural and man-made forces have had far reaching effects on the quality and extent of the coastal wetlands of Darien. These activities have inhibited the value and function of many of the wetlands and, in certain cases, it may be appropriate to reclaim and restore some wetlands to extend their natural cleansing and habitat functions. Based on the Coastal Area Management analyses, it has been determined on a preliminary basis that the Tokeneke Trail Marsh may be suitable for such reclamation.
8. Protection and Preservation of Shoreline, Particularly Lands Within 100 Feet of Mean High Tide, and Areas of Special Concern - This is a policy long pursued by the Town and is reaffirmed by the Coastal Area Management Program. The Commission and the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC), through their actions in the subdivision and special permit process, have preserved significant amounts of coastline through conservation easements. In addition, many private groups have been active in the preservation of significant areas of coastal wetland and shoreline. In the past 10 years, 15 percent of the total Darien shoreline or 2-1/2 miles have been placed under conservation easements, through individual efforts and formal actions taken by the Commission and EPC on subdivisions, site plans, and special permits.

Additional areas for possible acquisition or other form of permanent preservation should be identified.

9. Improvement and Expansion of Physical and Visual Public Access - Many of the most scenic areas of Darien are located on roads or parcels that overlook Long Island Sound and other areas of the coastal zone. Four identified public visual access locations include:
 - a. Goodwives River Road at Gorhams Pond and Ring's End Road Bridge,
 - b. Pear Tree Point Road, overlooking the Darien Harbor,
 - c. Five Mile River Road.
 - d. Nearwater Lane overlooking portions of Holly Pond.

It is the policy of the Commission that steps be taken to preserve these important cultural resources in perpetuity, wherever possible.

10. Identification and Control of Erosion and Sedimentation -As is true of much of the Coastal Area Management Program, the key to the implementation of this policy is through a program of public information and education. The target group for this information should be coastal landowners and the purpose of the program should be to inform these landowners of the proper methods of shoreline construction, maintenance and routine care.
11. Establishment of a Policy for Coastal Structures and Filling - As mentioned previously, the Town is not the final permit agency for the issuance of coastal structure permits or filling permits. Because of this the permit procedure is confusing to most potential applicants. Therefore, it becomes important for the Commission to clarify the permit procedure and make it accessible and usable, thereby encouraging applicants to use the proper procedure rather than to attempt to avoid it and undertake improper construction and management of coastal resources.

This policy also requires continuing vigilance on the part of the Town in order to insure that proper permit procedures and construction programs are undertaken. In 1983, the Town conducted a photographic inventory of its entire coastline to facilitate potential enforcement proceedings. The Municipal Coastal Program for Darien recommends that the Town maintain an inventory of existing fill and construction activities in the coastal area, so that non-permitted activities can be monitored.

12. Mitigation of Coastal Development Impacts - The principal purpose of this policy is to maintain the overall appearance of the Darien coastline as a unique natural attraction. By and large, this has been accomplished in Darien through the efforts of public agencies and private land owners. However, it will be the policy and purpose of coastal site plan review to assure that the natural beauty and function of the Darien coastline continue to be maintained, and in those instances where unwise management has occurred, that they be corrected in so far as is possible.
13. Management of Tidal Ponds - In most cases, management of Darien's tidal ponds would require limited dredging in order to dispose of sedimentary material. A most far-reaching management program for a coastal pond has been jointly undertaken between the Town of Darien and the City of Stamford for Holly Pond. This joint effort is to include the repair of the tidal gates, some dredging, possible improvement of upstream land uses in order to control rates of sedimentation and materials being disposed of in the Noroton River, and lastly, exploration of techniques to disperse the large swan population which is a large source of point pollution. It is likely that without such coordinated management between the two municipalities the Holly Pond area may again become the scene of algae blooms and, in the long run, increased maintenance expenses for both municipalities.

In addition, significant work has been undertaken recently to improve Gorhams Pond. The Town, in association with a neighborhood group know

as the Friends of Gorhams Pond, had conducted the necessary studies to determine what the precise needs were. The Friends then undertook the project to dredge a portion of the Pond itself and the Town agreed to construct a sedimentation basin in the Stony Brook. The Town has also agreed to construct a sedimentation basin in the upper reach of the Pond if this is feasible. Consequently, the future values of this very scenic resource are better assured for the future.

14. Reduce Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Areas -The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) notes that the Noroton and Five Mile River watersheds discharge directly into Long Island Sound. A Geographic Information System (GIS) methodology is needed to examine nonpoint sources of pollution and provide the basis for the identification and remediation of those sources. The largest contributors of such nonpoint pollution no doubt come from residentially developed areas and the impervious Interstate 95 and Route One corridors. The primary nonpoint pollutant is generally nitrogen. The source of nitrogen derives from septic systems and stormwater runoff, particularly from asphalt paved areas. Monitoring stations on both rivers need to be established to document nitrate and ammonia levels. The reduction of nitrogen entering these rivers will improve water quality and, in turn, adjacent shellfish beds.
15. Preservation and Enhancement of Coastal Resources - When compared to other Fairfield County municipalities, Darien has enjoyed more environmentally sensitive treatment of its coastal resources. Darien has long encouraged preserving a natural coastline and discouraged the construction of seawalls and other similar type structures. Although the residential land use pattern in the Darien coastal areas has largely been established, it should be continued in order to preserve existing visual qualities and opportunities and the cultural resource that the coast provides to all of Darien residents. The Town should remain prepared, however, to acquire coastal parcels when and where they may become available.

PLAN PROPOSALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The Town is nearly fully developed and any further development needs to be carefully regulated to avoid flooding, erosion, encroachments into watercourse and wetland protection of aquifers and to preserve the quality of its shoreline and coastal resources.

To this end, the following policies are recommended:

1. Areas of ecological importance such as streams, water bodies, wetlands (both tidal and freshwater), aquifers, steep slopes, and valuable wildlife areas should be preserved. Strict and rigorous application of environmental protection regulations should be a major means of maintaining and protecting natural resources important to the community which are not otherwise protected.

2. Development must be reasonably related to the land carrying capacity without creating harmful and unnecessary environmental impacts. Where sites have environmental limitations, appropriate designs should normally result in a lower density of development.
3. The establishment of wider controlled areas surrounding major wetlands, streams and waterbodies, i.e. up to 100 feet, should be investigated. Wherever possible, methods to naturally slow and retain storm water runoff and flood waters should be explored.
4. The establishment of an aquifer protection ordinance should be considered.
5. Priority land preserved as open space as part of the subdivision process should be that which either protects natural systems or preserves visual character.

A combination of regulations, effective enforcement and, more importantly, education is required. Darien's environmental protection requirements are continually increasing. The Town has never had a professionally trained environmental technician on its staff but, rather, personnel of the Planning and Zoning Department have filled in. However, the growing complexities of environmental issues require that a trained environmentalist be added to the staff.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Darien's proud history dating back to the Seventeenth Century has bestowed upon its people numerous historic structures that are intrinsic to the small town character of the Town. These structures should be preserved and maintained not only for historic reasons, but also for their aesthetic value. Darien should continue to encourage the preservation of historic buildings as well as stone walls and other features along main roads which, in their totality, represent the history of the community. These historic structures may also serve as architectural models for future construction.

Past Preservation Measures

In recognition of the importance of Darien's historic assets, the Darien Historical Society and the Junior League prepared an extensive "Natural and Architectural Preservation Survey" (NAPS) in 1978. Research was mapped onto an overlay of Darien's Existing Land Use map. The NAPS Survey evaluated nearly 500 sites, and was used to establish the Boston Post Road National Register of Historic Places District from Sedgwick Avenue to just east of Brookside Road. This National Register District incorporated the Congregational Church, its parsonages, and the Bates-Scofield Homestead (c. 1736). The NAPS Survey may be used as a base inventory whenever a historic resource is being renovated or threatened with demolition to alert property owners, architects, local builders and Town agencies such as the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Architectural Review Board.

Preservation of historic assets was enhanced by the establishment of the Designed Business One (DB-1) Zone in 1981 between Sedgwick Avenue and Brookside Road. The DB-1 Zone implemented floor area ratios that encouraged the preservation of the nineteenth century structures on this section of the Boston Post Road. In addition, more flexibility was afforded in the regulations to enable reasonable business use of these properties. Adaptive reuse as business and professional offices was encouraged in lieu of the demolition of these architecturally significant buildings to make way for the construction of large office buildings. During the past ten years, nearly all of these structures have been renovated and

preserved, and the DB-1 Zone has been a major success in achieving these preservation goals.

Numerous individual historic buildings within Darien's commercial zones have been preserved. On Leroy Avenue, the Hanford House (c. 1803) was restored as a guest house for the Middlesex Commons Condominiums, and the Gideon Clock House (c. 1822) has been saved as part of Clock Hill Homes. In the Central Business District, the Darien Playhouse (c. 1928) was preserved and two adjoining buildings recently renovated. The Old Schoolhouse (c. 1833) and the Tokeneke Center building on Tokeneke Road were renovated. Between West and Mansfield Avenues, the Commission has approved plans for facade improvements which respect the architectural significance of these buildings. In Noroton, the Jonathan Scofield House (c. 1757) and the adjoining former Noroton Post Office building at 1958 Boston Post Road both were preserved as beauty parlors; and the Christian Scientist Reading Room also was recently renovated. In Noroton Heights, the train station (c. 1894) was transformed into "The Depot", Darien's teen center, and the former Kerrigan Livery Stable on Noroton Avenue was restored. Conservation subdivisions have provided for the preservation of the Rose Cottage (c. 1826) on Leroy Avenue and the Shipway-Shields residence (c. 1908) on Middlesex Road, together with adjoining open fields. Numerous other historic structures throughout Darien's residential areas have also been carefully restored by their owners. In 1992, in response to the sudden demolition of several significant structures, the Town adopted a demolition ordinance, similar to ones in other Connecticut towns, that applies to all structures over fifty years old. Prior to the issuance of any demolition permit for such structures, public notice must be provided of the proposed demolition and, if appropriate, alternatives that can preserve the historic or architecturally significant structure are to be explored and a public hearing conducted.

Future Preservation Measures

As the Town plans its future development, it is imperative that the historical character of the Town and the architectural significance of the buildings with which it is entrusted be appreciated. New construction should be made compatible with existing structures.

There are significant opportunities for achieving these goals in Darien's various zoning districts.

In the Central Business District, the Model Block has established a Streetscape Program that appropriately reflects the nineteenth century character of the downtown area. There are plans to restore the old Darien Review Building (c. 1895) that will complement the Mansard style-Cantrell block (c. 1850) and the old Town Hall building (c. 1885). On the west side of the railroad bridge, numerous nineteenth century structures have been renovated to enhance the streetscape of the downtown area. The Darien Playhouse will continue to serve as an architectural anchor. Future development should complement the existing scale and character of the area.

In Noroton, the Neighborhood Business District Zone has assisted in the preservation of the historic nature of the oldest portion of the Boston Post Road in Darien. Three nineteenth century churches (St. Luke's Episcopal c. 1856; Noroton Presbyterian Chapel c. 1866; St. John's Roman Catholic Church c. 1889) bound the relatively small Noroton Business

District. This District is intended to serve the Noroton residential area and new development should be compatible with this historic area and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

In the Designed Business One and Two Zones between Sedgwick Avenue and Birch Road, facade improvements for the Sanford Electric building might be explored and adaptive uses that provide for the preservation of the Greek Revival Parsonage (c. 1816) located at 567 Boston Post Road should be planned.

In residential zones it is important that preservation of historic and architecturally significant structures be encouraged and that the scale and architectural details of future additions be compatible. Stonewalls and other historic features in residential areas should be saved and, where appropriate, a Scenic Road Program should be considered. Roads appropriate for consideration for inclusion, either in whole or in part, on the National Register of Historic Places include: the Boston Post Road in Noroton, Hollow Tree Ridge Road, Noroton Avenue, Rings End Road, Old Kings Highway, Mansfield Avenue, Prospect Avenue, Brookside Road, Raymond Street and Five Mile River Road. While inclusion on the National Register does not impede the future use of these homes, it would enhance property values and appreciation of these historic areas.

Property owners may want to revisit the possible establishment of Historic Preservation Districts. In the past, historic districts were discussed at various times for Rings End Road, Prospect Avenue and the area around the Congregational Church. It would be the purpose of such districts to permit the reasonable, economic use of these historic properties in a way which would encourage not only their preservation but their maintenance and restoration as well. If the creation of such historic districts and regulations governing activities within them were to be undertaken, this might be accomplished through an amendment to the existing Zoning Regulations. Activities in such districts should include aesthetic as well as structural and land use controls, in order to maintain the sense of the historic district as well as preserve the structures or sites that comprise that district.

The Commission is responsible for naming new streets with historically appropriate names. In the recent past the Commission has established the following new street names: Scofield Farm Road, Shields Lane, Rock Spring Road, Leeds Lane, Fresh Meadows Road, Red Mill Lane, Waterbury Lane, Bates Farm Road, Pine Brook Road, Bouton Lane, Three Wells Road, and Gideon Lane.

The Town of Darien must maintain historic assets under its care. The Beautification Commission is charged with fulfilling the Town's statutory obligation of maintaining the many historic cemeteries located throughout Darien. The Board of Selectmen are obligated to preserve the Darien train station. The Monuments and Ceremonies Committee has assumed responsibility for maintaining Darien's historic monuments. In connection with all of these historic preservation efforts, Darien's Town Historians and the Darien Historical Society provide invaluable resources.

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

Darien has the necessary and basic ingredients for being and remaining an extremely handsome and attractive suburban residential community. Its great length of beautiful shoreline bordering the Long Island Sound; its many attractive and potentially attractive inland streams, ponds and rivers; the varied topography of its countryside; its abundant wooded areas, frequent rock ledges, and other topographic features are gifts of nature which rival in appearance those of any town in the metropolitan area.

But with all these attractive characteristics, there remain certain areas and issues within the community which are either unsightly at the present, do not measure up to the character of most of the Town, or are being allowed to deteriorate. Examples of the latter would include both the removal and non-replacement of street trees by the Town and the destruction of sections of Darien's natural shoreline by individual property owners. Problems in commercial zones relate to litter, need for dumpster enclosures, screening of mechanical equipment, inappropriate signage and the deteriorated condition of a few commercial structures. The Commission relies upon the assistance of the Architectural Review Board and the Beautification Commission to assist in addressing these concerns.

In 1989 the Architectural Review Board was formally established by ordinance. Previously, it had long been an advisory board. The Architectural Review Board (ARB) consists of seven members and reviews from an aesthetic point of view: architectural plans; site plans; landscape and exterior lighting plans for all commercial structures or exterior alteration plans of existing structures and sign applications. The purpose of the ARB is to provide guidance in preserving and improving the appearance and beauty of the community, thereby achieving site plans and architectural design of buildings and other structures and improvements that are of such character as to harmonize with the neighborhood and the surrounding uses as well as protecting the Town's architectural heritage and furthering the preservation of property values.

The Beautification Commission became a municipal commission established by ordinance in 1991. Previous to this, it was an advisory commission for many years. The Commission consists of thirteen members and its purpose is to stimulate and coordinate public and private actions in maintaining the overall physical appearance of Darien. The Commission maintains 16 traffic islands throughout Darien as well as 16 historic graveyards and

continues to run the successful Adopt-A-Spot Program. The Commission is in the process of initiating a Municipal Street Tree Program that will include annual street tree plantings and tree maintenance.

Plan Proposals

The following basic strategy is recommended as a guide aimed at improving and maintaining the Town's appearance:

- the commitment to upgrading the Central Business District must be continued. This includes all new sidewalks constructed to the standards of the Task Force on Downtown Improvements, the complete new street lamp system, amenities such as benches and refuse cans, together with facade improvements where appropriate and other components of this program such as mini-parks and landscaped alcoves.
- land use regulations should continue to be updated to more fully encourage quality design for all new construction and encourage private investment in the downtown area that maintains the essential scale and small town character of the district. Sought after improvements should be planned in advance to facilitate the achievement of specific objectives.
- all new and expanded commercial developments adjoining residential areas should provide generous amounts of buffer planting to effectively screen and separate such incompatible land uses. New strategies should be developed to better assure the long term effectiveness and attractiveness of these buffers.
- Reduction in the quantity, and improvement in the quality, of signs should continue to be encouraged through the ongoing program of design review by the Town's Architectural Review Board, effective enforcement of present regulations, and cooperative programs by business organizations. The Town should assume the responsibility to continually assess its sign regulation program to assure that it is, in a pragmatic manner, achieving its purpose of improving the appearance of the Town.
- whenever feasible, but particularly in the business centers, placement of utility lines underground should be required.
- aesthetics, in terms of the architectural design of structures, and the layout and landscaping of sites, should be constantly addressed as part of all future municipal construction projects.
- Existing business and professional office buildings such as: 10 Corbin Drive, 745 and 777 Boston Post Road and 24 Old Kings Highway South should incorporate exterior facade improvements into any future interior renovation plans.

- attractive natural features, such as major trees, rock outcroppings, waterways, wetlands and scenic views should be preserved when the properties upon which they are located are developed.
- both public and private groups, as well as individuals, should be encouraged to take action to preserve, in appropriate settings and with suitable monumenting, those buildings and areas of historical significance.
- the Town's open character and its major scenic features, such as the shoreline, inland waterways, and wooded areas, should continue to be protected by public or private actions. Scenic views should be identified and preserved so that these views can be enjoyed by the Town's residents on a long term basis.

Public and Private Actions

The basic types of measures which will be needed to effectively implement the above program can be grouped into the following three general categories:

1. The development of detailed and specific plans by the various Town Departments, which are coordinated with the Town Plan of Development.
2. The development, adoption, and enforcement of additional protective regulations, as needed, to ensure and promote attractive development.
3. Positive programs of action, which should be taken by both private and public groups, to improve presently unattractive conditions, to encourage attractive new development and to preserve areas and buildings that are assets to the Town.

Some possible additional Town actions which might be considered in implementing improved community appearance objectives include:

1. The continuing use of conservation and visual easements, open space declarations or other types of legal agreements with private property owners to protect attractive natural features from encroachment by development.
2. The establishment of National Register Districts, Scenic Road designation or Historic Districts in accordance with State enabling legislation so as to help assure the preservation of the special character of certain areas within the Town.
3. The possible use of tax abatements, in accordance with Public Act 490, where such is necessary in encouraging landowners to preserve stream valleys and tidal marshes from development.
4. The provision of adequate town financial support to the Beautification Commission in its endeavors to improve the appearance of the Town's

commercial areas. For example, the Beautification Commission should consider landscaping improvements to the railroad embankment along Tokeneke Road from the railroad underpass to I-95 and in front of the Darien Dinner theatre, the Noroton Avenue-Ledge Road intersection and the entrance to the Noroton Heights railroad parking lot from Hollow Tree Ridge Road.

5. Initiation of a Fall as well as Spring town cleanup for all commercial zones.

Certain additional programs and actions will be required in the immediate future and these include:

Street Tree Maintenance Program

Of increasing importance to many Town officials and townspeople alike regarding the character and appearance of Darien is the need for more effective management of the Town's street trees. In addition to their many important environmental roles such as air quality, wildlife habitat or temperature control, trees are critical to the Town's character. They provide shade, unify and soften streetscapes, provide color, are a link to Darien's past and are an essential component of the quality of life in the community. Trees take years to establish and decades to mature and their unnecessary loss has a significant detrimental effect on the character of the Town.

The destruction and damage of shade, ornamental, and evergreen trees and plants and the indiscriminate and excessive cutting of these trees in subdivisions and on public and private property all cause barren and unsightly conditions creating increased surface drainage problems, increasing municipal costs to control drainage, impairment of stability and value of improved and unimproved real property, and deterioration to the community, all of which adversely affect the health, safety, environment, ecosystems, and general welfare of the Town of Darien and its inhabitants. For these reasons as well as others, measures must be taken to preserve Darien's trees and discontinue the Town's "D,D,D" management program which means Town-owned trees are attended to only if they are dead, diseased or dangerous. A new street tree program has been developed preliminarily under the auspices of the Town Beautification Commission.

Purpose of Street Tree Program:

To inventory and evaluate existing tree stock, maintain and enhance municipal tree stock, and develop and implement methods to protect and enhance street trees throughout the entire Town.

Overall Policies:

1. Plant as many new trees as possible each year.
2. Develop and implement a Tree Maintenance Program.
3. Encourage diversity of trees throughout Town.
4. Inspect new trees prior to planting to insure quality and conformance to specifications.

Policies for Street Trees:

1. Large as possible (minimum 3" caliper, no more than 50' on center)
2. Trees must be inspected prior to planting.
3. Trees should be the correct cultivar for the location.

Goals:

Immediate Goals:

1. Municipal Street Tree Program
 - a. Boston Post Road both in downtown areas and in Service Business East Zone.

Short Range Goals:

1. Municipal Street Tree Program
 - a. The remainder of business areas
 - b. Primary streets
 - c. Maintenance Program
 - d. Periodic Review Program.
2. Develop and Implement a Municipal Tree Program
 - a. Establish a Tree Subcommittee of Beautification Commission.
 - b. Establish an Annual Tree Planting Program
 - c. Study role of Tree Warden and make necessary changes
 - d. Research, draft and adopt a Tree Ordinance - to protect significant trees throughout Town.

Long Range Goals:

1. Municipal Street Tree Program
 - a. Secondary streets
 - b. Subdivisions
2. Inventory trees in parks and schools. Encourage diversity of tree species.

In summary, it is clear that Darien should increase its efforts at improving community appearance. Community support for the efforts of the Architectural Review Board is essential and increased funding for the Beautification Commission is imperative if a successful street tree program is to be initiated. Continued financial support by the Town to the Task Force on Downtown Improvements and cooperation by commercial property owners and tenants will improve the appearance of Darien's downtown area. The Planning and Zoning Commission should continue to encourage superior site plans and building design in all zoning districts. If these recommendations are actually carried out, there is no reason why the Town's image as an attractive place in which to live and do business cannot be greatly enhanced in the future, with a corresponding increase in civic pride and overall property values.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

As stated in the 1984 Town Plan, the basic street system in Darien is well established. The Town is bisected by the Boston Post Road and the Connecticut Turnpike. The local street network is basically complete. Other transportation impacts on the Town are created by State route connections with the Merritt Parkway immediately to the north in New Canaan and the Metro-North tracks with stations in Noroton Heights and Darien center.

Many improvements to these systems were recommended in the prior Plan and it is significant that many of these have actually been completed within the past ten years.

Central Business District

Major projects have been undertaken on the Boston Post Road. A state of the art, actuated signal system has been installed in the downtown area, replacing the previously existing 1930's vintage controls. This project has also incorporated modifications to traffic patterns, new traffic signage and lane markings, and other measures to improve traffic movement through the downtown area.

The elimination of left hand turns from Route One onto Tokeneke Road and, during peak hours, onto West Avenue has created a much improved flow through the railroad underpass despite a 20-47% increase in traffic since 1983. Formerly a single vehicle waiting to make one of these turns effectively shut down the entire system. However, low height clearance, closely spaced traffic signals, very high traffic volumes, and other factors continue to impede efficient traffic flow. Historically, this underpass has been a negative factor to moving vehicles in Darien's downtown but the recent improvements have made the situation tolerable. This condition has become part of the Town's character. The underpass precludes this portion of the Boston Post Road being used by through truck traffic. Local response to the proposal for a new underpass to the east of the existing facility and connecting Routes 136 and 124 has been resoundingly negative. However, the State DOT has recently begun

the process to study the existing underpass in terms of how it might be improved. Given the severe constraints, it is difficult to predict how, or if, any significant changes can be accomplished without having a series of totally adverse effects on the downtown.

It is recommended that the existing parallel parking spaces along the Boston Post Road in the downtown area be maintained to sustain the economic viability of this central retail area. The perpendicular parking spaces on the Boston Post Road to the west of Corbin Drive however, should either be eliminated or re-designed with additional parking provided to the rear of the buildings.

Noroton Heights Improvements

Key improvements in Noroton Heights have also been made in the past planning period. For example, new railroad overpasses have been constructed on both Noroton Avenue and Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Noroton Avenue now has four lanes at the bridge with left hand turning lanes northbound into Heights Road and southbound into Ledge Road.

The new Hollow Tree Ridge Road bridge provides an improved two lane facility with improved sight lines and higher weight limits.

At the crossroads of West Avenue and Edgerton Street a flashing signal has been installed. A professional traffic study determined that this high accident location would be more dangerous with a full traffic signal and, accordingly, the existing measure was implemented.

The Noroton Heights area, particularly the Noroton Avenue section, continues to be the second-most seriously trafficked part of the local road system, second only to the center of the downtown. Since 1980 Noroton Avenue south of West Avenue has experienced a 35% increase in traffic.

The Commission continues to adhere strictly to its long standing policy that no access to West Avenue shall be permitted from the business district except via Hollow Tree Ridge Road, Edgerton Street and Noroton Avenue. Consequently, all traffic improvements are designed on this basis.

Some of the improvements set forth in the 1984 Plan have not been accomplished and are still required or desirable. Included are:

- provide sidewalks on both sides of Heights Road from the existing walks to the Noroton Avenue/Heights Road intersection.
- increase the radius of the southeasterly corner of the Noroton Avenue/West Avenue intersection.
- continue the long standing objective to eliminate the perpendicular parking in the central and westerly sections of the Heights Road business districts. Included are the existing parking in front of the business block located between the entrance to the Stop and Shop parking area and Edgerton Street, and the existing perpendicular parking located between the Noroton Heights

Post Office and Gilbert's Pharmacy. At the location east of Edgerton, it may be possible to provide some alternative parking by establishing additional parallel spaces along the southerly and northerly sides of Heights Road. The ultimate objective would be to provide for parking and access to these stores from the rear, with only one or two vehicular accessways intersecting with Heights Road. The elimination of the perpendicular parking at the Post Office block would be dependent upon a complete redesign of the existing off-street parking supporting these stores. For obvious reasons, both of these alternatives must be part of a larger project in order to be implemented in any practical sense and such opportunities are limited.

- the ingress drive to the parking lot at the corner of Heights Road and Hollow Tree Ridge Road should be eliminated.

OTHER COMMERCIAL ZONES

The Commission will continue its policy and that of the State Department of Transportation of minimizing the number of curb cuts on the Boston Post Road. Other Commission policies are to favor curb cuts for commercial uses onto commercial roads rather than onto residential streets, and to improve sight line standards for all new intersection and curb cuts.

Traffic Signalization

As a result of a series of actions, the Town has achieved a status regarding traffic signals wherein essentially every one of its necessary traffic signals are, or soon will be, modern and up-to-date and capable of fulfilling requirements for the foreseeable future.

In addition to the recently installed Boston Post Road signal system within the Central Business District, all the Route One signals have been replaced or installed within this past planning period.

The signal at Ox Ridge School on Mansfield Avenue was upgraded by the Town in 1994. A coordinated system of actuated signals on Noroton Avenue between West Avenue and Maple Street will shortly be replacing the temporary construction signals and the outdated lights at West Avenue and Maple Street. This new system will be funded entirely by the State and Federal governments as part of the Turnpike's Incident Management Program. Similarly, the State is proposing to fund a new signal system at Hoyt Street (State Route 106) and Camp Avenue. These signals will have the necessary pre-emption devices to avoid the trapping of vehicles between the railroad gates on either of the roadways during a change of signal.

Inasmuch as most of the traffic signals in Darien are now under the jurisdiction of the State, and basically every one is up-to-date, it is anticipated that requirements for these devices will not be a significant issue for the Town in the foreseeable future with the one exception being signals that may be required as a result of the school expansion program.

Connecticut Turnpike (Interstate 95)

To say that the Turnpike has a pronounced impact on the Town is an understatement. Various proposals considered in the past and proposed by the State Department of Transportation for the future would have, or will, modify these impacts significantly.

Until recently, serious proposals were being advanced for expanding the Turnpike to eight, ten or twelve lanes. Each of the interchanges was proposed to be upgraded with longer acceleration and deceleration lanes, together with other improvements. The potential adverse impacts upon Darien from these major changes, as well as upon other communities along the corridor, would have been monumental. Fortunately, the passage of the Federal Clean Air Act, the tremendous costs associated with these proposals, and other factors have apparently caused the Commissioner of the DOT to discontinue planning on these proposals.

Studies are continually being conducted by the State to determine ways that this overtaxed highway can be made more efficient and safer. An "Incident Management Program" is currently underway to help achieve this in part. Darien's high accident portion of this highway requires continual response from the Town's fire departments, police and ambulance service. This incident program, involving the State and all the communities along the corridor from Greenwich to Stratford, is intended to develop maximum efficiency in clearing up incidents on the highway, ranging from a flat tire to a major accident or hazardous waste spill. The Town has been participating in the development of this program and will be an integral part of its implementation.

Figure 11 shows the 1992 traffic volumes at Interchanges #10 through #13. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) is presently studying reconfigurations of the southbound Interchange #13 ramps. A consultant has been retained to do this study. After the approved alternate is selected, the consultant will prepare Construction Documents. Three alternatives are being studied at this time. All involve the reconstruction of the Boston Post Road (U.S. 1) to six (6) lanes (two through lanes in each direction and two exclusive turn lanes) as well as new and coordinated traffic signals in the area of the new ramps.

**FIGURE 11.
TRAFFIC VOLUMES**

- a. Bring both ramps to the Boston Post Road at Richmond Drive.
- b. Bring both ramps to the Boston Post Road at a point approximately 600 feet west of Richmond Drive.
- c. Bring the off-ramp to the Boston Post Road at Richmond Drive and the on-ramp to the Boston Post Road at a point approximately 600 feet west of Richmond Drive.

With the proper number of lanes on the Boston Post Road and the proper coordination of traffic signals, any of these options should provide acceptable operation along the Boston Post Road.

At this time, it is understood that there are no other plans to alter any other interchange in Darien. There has been significant discussion, however, with regard to developing a long-term plan for the I-95 corridor. In June 1993, CDOT completed a conceptual study of the southwest corridor in which the possible widening of I-95 was discussed. One of the possibilities reviewed as part of an I-95 widening project was the closure of Interchange #12 (Tokeneke Road). With the closure of the northbound off-ramp, some of the exiting vehicles would go to Exit #11 and some would continue on I-95 and exit at Interchange #13 at the Norwalk city line. Conversely, vehicles wishing to enter I-95 from Tokeneke Road would either use Interchange #11 or #13. The closure of Interchange #12 would cause additional traffic into downtown Darien. It would also induce some trips onto local streets such as Locust Hill and Old King's Highway South as local residents would try to avoid the town center area. Without a more detailed analysis of the origin and destination patterns of those vehicles using the ramps, the exact amount of vehicle diversions on a given alternate route cannot be easily determined. There can be little doubt that the safety and efficiency of I-95 would, however, be improved by the closure of Interchange #12.

Another option considered in the 1993 study was relocating the existing Noroton Avenue Interchange (#10) to Hollow Tree Ridge Road. While this may provide a slight operational improvement on I-95, it would have a negative effect on the residential neighborhoods along Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Hollow Tree Ridge Road is a residential street exhibiting a narrow roadway, poor horizontal and vertical alignment, limited intersection sight distances and inadequate pavement sections to handle regular truck traffic and high volumes. The relocation of an interchange could also negatively impact the commuter parking lots adjacent to the Noroton Heights station. Hollow Tree Ridge Road is not an appropriate access to I-95.

The closure of Interchange #10 could cause a significant increase in traffic along the Boston Post Road. Presently, Noroton Avenue serves as an alternate to Interchange #11. The closure of Interchange #10 would greatly reduce traffic on Middlesex Road and Noroton Avenue and direct traffic to a portion of the Boston Post Road that has additional capacity.

Recommended Traffic and Transportation Improvements

There are a number of locations where safety and/or capacity improvements should be considered. In many instances, the limited amount of available public right-of-way will preclude physical widening of the roadway - at least in the short term. In other instances, safety improvements will require the cooperation of adjacent property owners.

The specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Heights Road at Hollow Tree Ridge Road

The westbound approach of Heights Road should be widened to provide separate left and right turn lanes. This improvement would eliminate the queuing for the majority of motorists who turn right onto Hollow Tree Ridge Road.

2. Noroton Avenue from West Avenue to Hecker Avenue

The Connecticut Department of Transportation will have a signal project for this portion of Noroton Avenue. The existing temporary signals at Ledge Road and at Heights Road will be permanent. More importantly, the five signalized intersections are in the process of being interconnected. This would help reduce the queuing that now occurs on Noroton Avenue, between West Avenue and Heights Road. As part of this assignment, a review of the current lane designations, at Heights Road and Ledge Road, should also be made in order to maximize the capacity potential of the intersections and the establishment of a right turning lane on Ledge Road should be strongly considered.

3. Noroton Avenue at West Avenue

To the extent possible, the northbound Noroton Avenue approach to the intersection should be widened to provide for a separate left turn lane, together with a straight through lane. This will also require some widening at the southeast corner to taper back to the existing roadway width. Alternatively, if capacity permits, once the

Noroton Avenue signals are interconnected, a northbound advance phase could be incorporated into the signal phasing pattern. In addition, the radius at the southwest corner of the Noroton Avenue/West Avenue intersection should be enlarged to facilitate turning movements.

4. *Boston Post Road at Brookside Road*

The sightlines on the Brookside Road approaches are poor. It is suggested that they be improved to the extent possible. Secondly, a longer "all red" signal phase should be incorporated into the signal operation to ensure the intersection is clear of vehicles before a green indication is given to the next direction of traffic.

5. *Brookside Road at Old King's Highway North*

This intersection operates with stop signs on the southbound Old King's Highway North approach and on the Pine Brook approach. The other two legs of the intersection are not controlled. As this location has some sightline restraints, a full four-way stop sign control would probably be beneficial.

6. *Mansfield Avenue at Stephen Mather Road*

Sightlines from Stephen Mather Road looking south are poor due to the sharp horizontal curve on Mansfield Avenue. It is suggested that the existing vegetation along the west side of Mansfield Avenue be extensively trimmed and, if necessary, initiate discussions with the adjacent property owner to similarly trim on private property.

7. *Mansfield Avenue at Ox Ridge Elementary School*

The existing traffic signal needs to be modernized (upgraded) and to be timed in a fashion more responsive to actual vehicular demands - both on the main artery as well as on the side streets. New loop detectors are necessary along with the provisions of an advanced northbound movement in the signal phasing pattern and the northbound lane widened. To the extent possible, the corner radii on either side of the school driveway should be enlarged to facilitate turning movements.

8. *Mansfield Avenue at McLaren Road*

Sightlines at this location, as motorists exit McLaren Road, are poor in both northbound and southbound directions. In addition, the up-grade further impairs the ability to move onto the main artery in a timely fashion. It is suggested that discussions with the adjacent property owners be initiated to improve sightlines. It is also suggested that the roadway grade be leveled on the approach to Mansfield Avenue. Note that both are needed - not just one or the other. Additionally, consideration should be given to relocating utility poles to improve sight lines.

9. *Mansfield Avenue at Sedgwick Avenue*

This four-way stop intersection is also controlled by a flashing beacon. Sightlines are poor on virtually all approaches. Additionally, advance warning signs indicating a stop condition ahead are hard to see. The most immediate need is to extensively trim vegetation along the sides of both roadways and to insure warning signs are clearly visible to passing motorists. Trimming of vegetation on adjacent private property at the four corners of the intersection, if permitted, would significantly improve sight lines.

10. Hoyt Street at Middlesex Road/Christie Hill Road

There are significant back-ups on a daily basis at this four way stop sign controlled intersection. The morning commuter peak hour exhibits queues in the southbound direction as motorists head for Stamford. In the afternoon commuter peak hours, back- ups are found on the eastbound approach to the intersection. To remedy this situation, an additional approach lane is required on the southbound approach and the intersection may have to be put under signal control.

11. Tokeneke Road at Five Mile River Road and Raymond Street

This intersection is complicated by the existence of a fifth leg. Plans need to be completed for the closure of the "old White Bridge" over the Five Mile River connecting Tokeneke Road and Jacob Street in Rowayton. These plans, which must be prepared in conjunction with Norwalk, will make the old bridge into a pedestrian area and redesign the intersection of Cudlip and Jacob Streets in Rowayton. Requirements for signalization at this intersection should also be explored.

12. Boston Post Road Signalization

The traffic signals on the Boston Post Road are coordinated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. They are timed primarily to move traffic on the corridor. As the Boston Post Road parallels I-95, this route has also been designated as an incident management route to accommodate (except trucks) overflow volumes or emergency condition volumes on the Interstate. Signal timing and coordination again reflects these priorities. As a consequence, at some locations, an insufficient amount of green time and/or long signal change wait time is periodically given to the side streets. Such locations include Tokeneke Road, Center Street, Corbin Drive and Nearwater Lane (at school arrival/exiting times). To remedy this situation, the State needs to be made aware of these situations in order to effectuate signal timing changes especially during off-peak daytime hours and at night.

13. Koons' Parking Lot

The Koons' lot provides approximately 325 parking spaces for use by rail commuters. A one-day field survey indicated an occupancy rate of about 80% in this facility. At other times, the lot is fully occupied. Given that other railroad station parking lots, both at the Darien and Noroton Heights stations, are similarly heavily utilized with very few daily spaces available, the loss of Koons' parking would be highly detrimental to the Town. Should this parcel go on the market, the Town should

acquire it to continue its use as a parking facility for the train station or for the creation of a Town transportation center.

14. *Long-Term Overview of Increasing Traffic Volumes*

Since the 1984 Town Plan, traffic has grown on most sections of the Darien street system. The rate of growth, on average, has been between 3-4 percent per year. As the cities and towns in Connecticut recover from the recent recession, and existing vacant office space in Stamford is filled, continued increases in traffic over the long-term would be expected. What is yet to be determined, however, is the future rate of increased traffic activity. Bypass routes, such as Middlesex Road, will continue to be favored by motorists to avoid more congested locations such as the Boston Post Road at the railroad underpass. If additional capacity were ever to be added to I-95, the possibility exists that further traffic growth along the Boston Post Road might be restrained. Under this circumstance, there would be little need to seek an alternate route except under emergency conditions.

To accommodate traffic growth on the Darien street system, locations currently under stop sign control may require signalization. At locations under signal control, additional approach lanes and the use of intelligent fully-actuated signals would be likely.

15. Sightline Zoning Regulation Changes

It is suggested that the Town consider revising its sightline requirements at new street intersections and curb cuts. Instead of a standard 30' x 30' triangle, travel speeds on the adjacent main artery should be taken into account. The Connecticut Department of Transportation guidelines provide a starting point for Town consideration. (See table below and Figure 12).

Intersection		
Travel Speed	Sightline (Ft.)	
On Main Roadway	Minimum	Desirable
20 miles per hour	125	170
25 miles per hour	150	230
30 miles per hour	200	310
35 miles per hour	285	400
40 miles per hour	365	505
45 miles per hour	455	630
50 miles per hour	565	770

16. Rings End Bridge

Scheduled repairs to the Rings End bridge need to be completed.

**FIGURE 12.
SIGHT DISTANCES**

PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

As a guide to the future of Darien, the Town Plan must review the adequacy of basic community services and discuss their status with respect to meeting projected needs. Once again, the changing composition of the Town's population, this time involving dramatic growth in young families, is placing increasing major demands on the educational, cultural and recreational opportunities in the Town at a time when vacant land is scarce. Requirements for other public services and facilities also continue to increase and become more complex.

Town Hall and Government Center

The former Darien High School building has served the Town well for the past decade as the Town Hall. In addition to the Town Government and Board of Education offices, the building is also used by the Darien Arts Council for many of its lessons, rehearsals and performances. Recreational opportunities are also provided in the gymnasium and on the playfields surrounding the building.

The overall Town Hall building is 78,745 square feet with 39,385 square feet being Town Hall use, providing facilities for approximately 50 employees and the other various functions. Also included in the structure are offices for the administration of the Board of Education, comprising 11,000 square feet for 23 full time and 8 part-time employees, an auditorium for 450 persons, gymnasium facilities, an arts and crafts room and various storage facilities. Off-street parking is available for 205 vehicles. Based on experience to date, this facility should be adequate to serve its selected Town government functions for many years

to come. The Town may wish to consider purchasing two lots on the corner of the Boston Post Road and Renshaw Road for expanded recreational parking facilities.

Town Schools

With two nationally recognized secondary schools, numerous programs that receive regional and national recognition, and graduates who attend the country's best colleges and universities, the school system is one of the Town of Darien's prime attractions. Town expenditures have continuously supported an educational system that is capable of developing the potential of each of the students entrusted to it. In 1995, the ten-year outlook for the Darien Public Schools is one of the sustained enrollment growth and continued commitment to excellence.

Elementary School Reorganization and Building Program

The Town's elementary schools are presently divided into two K-2 and two 3-5 schools, and one kindergarten annex. Three elementary schools were closed over the last two decades: Baker Elementary School in 1971, Hollow Tree Elementary School in 1983, and the Holmes School in 1986.

In contrast to two decades of decline, elementary schools have now begun a pattern of enrollment growth which is expected to continue through the next decade. The elementary schools are currently overcrowded, and fifteen portables are located on the grounds. Minimal storage and special program facilities have exacerbated overcrowding.

In April, 1992, the Board of Education decided to implement a short-term solution by adding portable classrooms while maintaining the K-2 and 3-5 grade configuration. They also decided to undertake a more comprehensive study of facilities and grade organization. In the summer of 1992, the Futures Group Inc., of Glastonbury, CT began to study population trends and project school population. Also in 1992, Peter Gisolfi Associates, Architects, were retained to examine ways that facilities might be changed in response to the projected growth in student population.

Subsequent to a 1993 referendum, which rejected a four school K-5 plan, the Board of Education approved a reorganization and school building program calling for five, K-5 schools. A \$24.5 million project for reopening Holmes School and completing renovations and additions to all five elementary schools was approved by the RTM in 1994, and the five, K-5 schools will be open in 1996. Each of five schools, Ox Ridge, Holmes, Royle, Tokeneke and Hindley, will house 22 regular classrooms; four rooms for music, art, computer, and special education; a gym and expanded library media center; small rooms for special services; and expanded storage facilities. In order to facilitate an increased emphasis on science instruction, new classrooms will have sinks. Local area networks for computer data and video are being considered. In addition, Ox Ridge and Hindley will house rooms for district-wide special education programs, enabling students who traditionally would have been out-placed to be educated within the Town.

Projected enrollment for the fall of 1996 will be approximately 395 students for each of the five elementary schools. Maximum class sizes are 23 for grades K-1, 25 for grades 2-3, and 26 for grades 4-5. Thus, the absolute capacity of each school is approximately 550.

Facilities Summary

Existing facilities are described below. Data on acreage is taken from the 1992 Master Plan prepared for the Board of Education by Peter Gisolfi Associates.

Ox Ridge School: This school is on a parcel of 9.5 acres which fronts Mansfield Avenue. Currently a K-2 school, it will be organized in 1996 as a K-5 school. It was originally built in 1966 and an addition was constructed in 1976. Currently the school houses 447 students in 18 classrooms and six portable classrooms. Two of these rooms are dedicated to art and music.

Holmes School: This school will be reopened in September 1996 after a renovation and expansion project. It is located on a 9.5 acre parcel which fronts on Hoyt Street in a densely developed residential section of Town. Originally built in 1931, additions were constructed in 1952 and 1976. The 1976 addition gave the school a total of 18 classrooms, including art and music. The school was closed in 1986, due to declining enrollment.

Royle School: This school is located on an 8.3 acre parcel along Mansfield Avenue. Built in 1948, additions were constructed in 1958 and 1976. The 1995 enrollment is 432 students in grades three through five. Royle has 18 permanent and four portable classrooms. Three of these rooms are dedicated to music, art, and computer. Kitchen and cafeteria facilities are undersized for the growing population, and these areas will be expanded as part of the 1996 building project. Two rooms will also be demolished at that time.

Hollow Tree School: Hollow Tree School was closed in 1983. It was then turned over by the Board of Education to the Board of Selectmen and later reopened as a Senior Center. Due to elementary school overcrowding, the Board of Selectmen approved the temporary use of four classrooms at Hollow Tree for kindergarten during 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Tokeneke School: Tokeneke is located on a 12 acre parcel, with frontage on Tokeneke Road and Old Farm Road. This K-2 school was built in 1956, with additions made in 1966 and 1976. The school has 17 permanent and three portable classrooms. Three of these rooms are dedicated to art, music, and special education. The 1995 enrollment is 370 in grades K-2.

Hindley School: This 3-5 school is located on a 8.2 acre parcel with frontage on the Boston Post Road and Nearwater Lane. It was built in 1947, with an addition in 1976. It currently houses a total of 18 permanent classrooms and two portable classrooms. Three rooms are dedicated to art, music and computer. Like Royle School, two rooms will be demolished as part of the 1996 building project. Current enrollment is 321 students in grades three through five.

Middlesex Middle School: Located on a 11.6 acre parcel off Hollow Tree Ridge Road, Middlesex Middle School was built in 1937. Additions were made in 1952 and 1976,

bringing the school to its current size of 38 classrooms. At the time of the 1984 Darien Plan of Development, the school housed 565 students (1983-84) in grades 7-8. Subsequently, in 1986, the school was converted to a 6-8 middle school, employing multiple teams on a grade level. Since 1990 enrollment has been slowly increasing, and it stands at 622 in 1994-95. The 1992 Master Plan ("Gisolfi Report") fixed the operational capacity of Middlesex at 666. The school is expected to require one or more portables in 1997.

Enrollment projections approved by the Board of Education in the fall of 1994 show the school enrollment increasing in 2004-05 to between 1065 under a "low end of range" enrollment projection to 1258 under a "high end of range" enrollment projection.

In 1994 the Board of Education charged a Facilities Task Force with the responsibility of "recommending a 6-8 facilities plan to accommodate high end enrollment projections for the target year 2004-2005". On March 10, 1995, the Board of Education approved five options for consideration by the Task Force:

- a. one 1200 student school housed at Middlesex/Hollow Tree site
- b. two schools of 600: one at the current site and one at a new site
- c. two schools of 600: both at the Middlesex /Hollow Tree site
- d. two schools of 600: one at the current site and one at the Town Hall site
- e. two schools of 600: connected with as much common core as possible

In order to conduct a feasibility study of the five options, the architectural firm of Fletcher Thompson was retained to assist the Task Force. A recommendation is expected to come to the Board of Education in late 1995.

Darien High School: Built in 1960 and housing grades 9-12 in 49 classrooms, the Darien High School is located on a 58.6 acre parcel off Middlesex Road and Hollow Tree Ridge Road. The 1983 enrollment of 1222 required two portable classrooms to be placed on the grounds. Since then, the school experienced a dramatic decrease in enrollment to 676 in 1994-95. Portable classrooms are not in use at the current time. However, enrollment is now expected to rise, and the "high end of range" projection for 2004-05 is 1152. In 1988, the Town purchased the adjoining Diller property for future recreational fields.

Since 1983, a number of new programs have been created, some of which are required by law. New programs have resulted in rooms being allocated to special education as well as computer technology. In order to understand the long term facilities implications of growth, the Board of Education retained a consultant in 1995 to prepare a capacity report that will, in part, analyze "the school's capacity to provide a quality educational program for student enrollments of 994 (in the year 2003) and for 1200, 1400 and 1600 students in subsequent years". In addition, "a series of practical, cost-effective recommendations will be included".

Enrollment Projections

School enrollment in Darien reached a peak of 5,111 in the 1973-74 school year. Since 1984, at the time of the last long range plan, K-12 enrollment declined from 3081 to a low of 2643 in 1989. Since that time, K-12 enrollment has slowly risen, and 1994-95 total enrollment is

**FIGURE 13
FIVE K-5 SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1996

2942. In order to establish reasonable long-term projections, birth scenarios proposed by the Futures Group were adopted for long-term kindergarten projections in 1992. Accounting for these projections, the “high end of range” K-12 enrollment projections for 2004-05 is 5244.

The K-5 high-end projection for 2004 is 2834, compared with the 1994-95 actual enrollment of 1644. Should this projection prove accurate, portable classrooms will become necessary at elementary school sites.

With middle school enrollment expected to nearly double from 622 to a high end projection of 1258 in 2004-05, construction options are either a second school or an addition on the combined Middlesex property/Hollow Tree. The expansion of Middlesex Middle School could affect the Darien Senior Center.

The impact of growth on the High School is currently being studied; however, it is unlikely that a second site would be required to manage growth.

Police Protection

The Darien Police Department is located in a two-story brick structure on Hecker Avenue, just off the Boston Post Road. The full staff is comprised of 50 officers, seven clerical support staff and two maintenance people. Additionally, there are 25 part-time traffic agents and three special officers available to assist the Department. The most pressing staffing needs at this time are for three dispatchers, one for each shift. Currently, the dispatching facilities are operated by one officer and oftentimes that officer is not able to keep up adequately with the demands. In addition to emergency-related tasks, the dispatcher's facilities are used for numerous information purposes.

In 1987, the Police headquarters building was completely modernized rendering it safer and more convenient for police functions. While this program was generally successful, there are still outstanding needs for the Department. In addition to improved phone and communications systems, both outdoor and indoor storage facilities are needed. It is proposed by the Police Department that a second story be added above the garage for bulk storage and additional outdoor storage be secured on an adjoining parcel. The Town should thoroughly explore use of the adjacent Mason property to fulfill these requirements. The existing headquarters site is essentially fully developed and intensively used. Any additional space requirements of any form cannot be met on the existing property. Accordingly, it continues to be recommended in the Plan that the Mason property to the east, together with the gas station and car wash, be acquired so that the Department's long term facilities needs can be met without having to be forced into an extremely expensive relocation at a cost far greater than the recommended acquisition.

Darien Explorer Post 911 is a program in which 15 to 25 high school students participate annually. They augment the Police Department by providing services to the community under the supervision of five Darien Police Department officers. Students assist the police in weather related emergencies, traffic control, patrol, vacant house checks, communications, and area wide searches.

Emergency Medical Facilities

Darien's emergency medical services (EMS) are provided by the all volunteer Post 53 which was established in 1970. EMS itself is a Town department and Post 53 is under contract to the Town to deliver emergency ambulance service. Post 53 is completely independent of the Town government. A membership of 50 high school students and 15 to 20 adults staff the service. In addition to the training and experience, serving in the Post is considered a very high honor and consequently, positions are very competitive. The Darien Police Department is legally positioned as "first medical responder" and along with a Post 53 advanced life support adult and a "fly car", responds to any location in Darien in two to three minutes after being dispatched by the Police Department. The ambulance follows in less than ten minutes.

Post 53 is currently housed in its modern, 7400 square foot facility at the corner of Noroton Avenue and the Interchange 10 entrance to the Turnpike. This structure was completed in 1989. It includes a four bay garage which houses the three ambulances and one "fly car", training facilities, a complete "home away from home" for the volunteers, and a communications center which also serves as a back up for Police Department communications. It is deemed to be in an excellent location to effectively serve the Town and is reputed to be the best EMS training facility in the area.

Post 53 responds to approximately 1000 calls per year, of which 50 to 80 require the assistance of a paramedic intercept. This assistance is necessary for uncontrolled, life threatening medical conditions and is provided by either Norwalk Hospital or Stamford EMS. No need for a separate paramedic capability in Darien is foreseen. The existing physical facilities are deemed to be adequate for at least the next decade and assuming that Post 53 continues to maintain its exceptionally strong reputation, adequate staffing should pose no problems.

However, other concerns exist relative to maintaining the quality of service and the system. Costs are constantly escalating due to equipment needs, financial services at hospitals and new requirements such as those established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act. In addition, improvements will be required to the communications capabilities on a continuing basis. Improved computer-aided dispatch, regional dispatch procedures and other upgrades will be required to assure continuing excellent service. These communication requirements are not unlike those for the Police Department and the volunteer fire departments.

Fire Protection

Darien's fire protection is provided by the three highly-trained, all volunteer departments located in Darien Center (founded in 1895), Noroton (founded in 1896) and Noroton Heights (founded in 1903). In addition, a Fire Training Center, used by all three departments, is located on Ledge Road within the site of the Refuse Disposal Center.

The firehouses occupied by these departments are all post-war brick structures in sound condition. One floor in each firehouse is used for fire-fighting equipment and the other floor is used for meeting rooms and other accessory functions. It is projected that additions will be needed at the Noroton and Noroton Heights stations in the near future. The Noroton facility

may require additional storage areas. At Noroton Heights, similar requirements must be met. All three departments report that the location and size of the respective headquarters sites will be adequate for the foreseeable future.

The three departments are each administered independently. There also is a nine member Board of Fire Commissioners whose function is to establish policy and coordinate fire protection services. In addition, they are supported by a professional Fire Marshal's Office located in Town Hall.

Each volunteer fire company owns the land and building which it occupies and receives an annual appropriation from the Town for equipment maintenance, partial operating expenses and insurance. Some of the equipment is owned by the Town and some by the fire companies themselves.

The fire companies have noted certain impediments to fire emergency response in Town. Speed bumps, although much fewer in number than in years past, continue to be a hazard. Noroton Bay, Holly Lane, Greenleaf Avenue, Bumpalong Road and Crooked Mile Road are four such remaining areas. The restricted heights of the railroad underpasses at Raymond Street and Leroy Avenue continue to be barriers to some of the larger equipment and alternative response routes are used. The pre-emption system used by the Darien Fire Department for the traffic signals on the Boston Post Road has occasional technical problems. Most importantly, the water service provided by the Connecticut-American Water Company requires significant improvement in terms of volume and available pressure. Existing main sizes must be upgraded in various parts of Town and an improved pumping station must be provided at the Chestnut Street facility. This increased pumping capacity is critical to the maintenance of pressure. Several of these problems are currently being addressed by the Water Company. A new connection between the Bridgeport Hydraulic pipeline in Hoyt Street near the Parkway to the Tower at Tower Drive will relieve much of the problem in the northerly section of Town and improvements to the Chestnut Street facilities will provide interim benefits to the southerly sections.

Other improvements needed in the area of fire protection include a new modern communications system which needs to be fully coordinated with police and medical emergency systems. It is also the objective of the three fire departments to establish a computer-aided dispatch system to improve efficiency and response time.

Recognizing the above mentioned needs, each of the three volunteer departments provides excellent fire protection for the Town. This translates into the best insurance rating for communities served wholly by volunteer departments.

Library

Founded in 1994, the Darien Library celebrated its centennial this year. The current facilities are located on the west side of Leroy Avenue between Hale Lane and Old Stone Road. This structure was built in 1957 with additions constructed in 1974 and 1988.

In 1988, land was donated to the Library by the developers of the Middlesex Commons condominium complex directly to the south of the Library site. This additional parking area

was planned for in the 1984 Town Plan and enabled the addition of 39 parking spaces on the site for a total of 81 spaces, meeting what was at that time a critical need.

The Darien Library is the busiest library in the state on a per capita basis, with more than 90% of the Town's residents having library cards. National standards indicate that the typical community average is approximately 40%. Some 20,000 people, of whom approximately 25% are from neighboring communities each month use the library's services.

The total adult and children's circulation was 431,951 in 1992/93. In part, this involves a total library book stock of 117,009 volumes, together with more than 1500 each of books on tape, compact discs and video cassettes. Computer facilities and services are constantly being expanded and improved with many forms of data resources being added.

The Library is currently overtaxed in terms of its ability to provide all the programs and services demanded of it. While some expansion potential will result from remote access to the Library's computers and other such efficiencies, additional site area may still be required. The existing investment in the facility in combination with its convenient central location would indicate that the only practical opportunity to expand the physical facilities would be on the parcel to the north. This is currently the site of the local American Red Cross offices. It is strongly recommended that the Library take the necessary steps to assure that if, or when, some or all of this property becomes available, or the opportunity for shared uses arises, the Library is prepared to take appropriate action. Assistance from the Town, in this regard, may also be required.

Darien Senior Center

For the past ten years, the former Hollow Tree Elementary School property located on Edgerton Street has been serving as the Town's senior activities center. The facilities have undergone substantial renovation, largely by the membership, to establish a well attended, functional facility.

Approximately 240 townspeople who are 62 years of age or older use the center for lunchtime dining, entertainment, charitable work, skill classes, and various forms of recreation. The dining facilities alone are oftentimes used at their full capacity of approximately 120 persons. The seniors also use the facilities to undertake contributions to the community such as repairing furniture for Person-to-Person, carrying out major mailings for local charitable agencies and producing items for charitable events. By all measures, the Senior Center has proved to be extremely successful. An important policy decision facing the Town is to make a commitment to maintaining this facility at its current location or establishing a permanent alternative site. The current site of the Senior Center is ideal. A high percentage of seniors who use the Center are from the Noroton Heights neighborhood and the small amount of traffic generated by this particular use has no adverse traffic impacts on the residential neighborhood along Edgerton Street. It is recommended that the Senior Center either remain in its existing building or be relocated to a new 10,000 square foot structure in the lower parking lot on the southerly portion of the site. However, should the middle school require all of this land area as part of the expansion program, the Town should be committed to re-establishing the Center elsewhere in the community.

Town Garage

The Town has completed a project to upgrade and expand the Town Garage. This expanded facility should meet Town requirements for the next planning period.

The renovation of the Town Garage involved the addition of approximately 8,000 square feet of structure onto the existing 15,500 square foot facility. This should be adequate to serve the combined needs of the Department of Public Works, the Board of Education, and the Parks and Recreation Department. Sufficient space will be provided for all equipment and storage needs and efficiencies can be achieved by various shared facilities. Included among these are a lunch/conference room, workshop with power tools, locker rooms, lavatories and specialized storage areas. A maximum of 39 employees would be served by this combined facility.

The project also makes provision for two service bays with hydraulic lifts which would enable the Town to establish a fleet management program for its over 100 vehicles. Carried out properly, this could result in substantial savings over the long term.

An additional structure desired as part of this development is a sand/salt storage dome for the proper storage and distribution of this material. The retaining walls for the former incinerator also needs to be removed and the area regraded.

Solid Waste

There is a pressing need to maintain and update the Long Range Master Plan for the entire Refuse Disposal Center site. This master plan would include suggestions for the sand and salt storage facility, regrading of the former incinerator area to improve the efficiency and safety of the site, possible land acquisition to the east for equipment storage, a landscaping plan to protect Cummings Brook, an improved recycling dropoff layout, and other appropriate factors.

It is anticipated by the Department of Public Works that the existing Transfer Station will be adequate for the foreseeable future. It can be expected that the costs of disposing of the collected material will continue to increase. For example, new mandates on recycling requirements are continually being advanced and the costs of landfill space for ash residue are constantly increasing. The largest "spike" in costs related to disposal during the next five years will most likely result from trucking costs for ash disposal. There is limited capacity at the site to assume much in the way of additional or new materials or significantly higher volumes of the materials currently being collected and processed, such as brush. Experience suggests that other changes in the operation of this facility may be required in the future. For example, there is limited demand for the compost resulting from leaf collection other than an occasional homeowner, so land space for this activity may become too expensive.

Other activities conducted on the site may be impacted by owners of surrounding residential properties who object to noise or odors resulting from the operation. Disposal of the Town's solid waste will certainly continue to be an issue during the next decade.

Transportation Center

The limited capacities of the Connecticut Turnpike, Merritt Parkway and Boston Post Road to meet the transportation needs of the region dictate that if the region is going to continue to flourish, improved transportation will have to be made available. A most logical choice is increased use of the railroad on an intra-state level. Much discussion has taken place about multi-modal alternatives and Darien has a good opportunity to achieve this with its two favorably located railroad stations.

The Darien station with its central location would offer an excellent opportunity to create a Town Transportation Center. The station has extensive parking available so that the center could be designed with no need for parking garages or other features out of character with Darien. Convenient access areas could be provided for bus, van, taxi and other public transit services so that a coordinated transportation system for the Town could be established.

Essential to the development of such a facility would be the acquisition of the Koons commuter parking lot on the northerly side of the railroad. The entire land area bounded by Leroy Avenue, West Avenue and the Boston Post Road could then be designed as an attractive and fully functional combination of drives, parking, landscaping, pick up and drop off areas and other elements of such a center and would enable this to be done in keeping with the character of the Town.

As with many other elements of this Plan, a modern, convenient transportation center of the sort described above would contribute strongly to the support of Darien's business community and the overall quality of life in the Town. The Town will continue to support public transportation uses for its train station and discourage private commercial activities.

There is also a need to improve security measures at the Darien and Noroton Heights train stations and provide public toilet facilities on the eastbound side of the Darien Train Station adjacent to the Taxi Office.

Town Sidewalks

Most of the sidewalks along Darien's arterial streets were constructed during the 1930's. Many of the sidewalks in residential areas were constructed in the 1950's and 1960's to provide safer access to Darien's schools. Given the tremendous increase in traffic since 1980 and the increased number of joggers, bicyclists and other pedestrians attempting to safely use Darien's roads and sidewalks, it is imperative that the Town increase its efforts to repair existing sidewalks and construct new ones where needed.

Sidewalk Maintenance

The Town has recently been addressing the formulation of an official policy on sidewalk construction and maintenance which would be part of an overall management program for these facilities. Included would be:

- portland cement concrete shall be used in all areas zoned commercial, on street frontages of municipal buildings including schools, and along designated thoroughfares, regardless of zoning. Such designated thoroughfares would include: West Avenue, Tokeneke Road, Hoyt Street, Boston Post Road and Noroton Avenue.
- asphalt (bituminous concrete) shall be used for all other residential sidewalk construction and replacement projects.

The current objective is to continue a 15-year capital program for the replacement/repair of sidewalks. It has been projected by the Department of Public Works that it will cost approximately \$3.8 million for the repair of sidewalks in the 15 year program. It is estimated that the total value of Town sidewalks is now approximately \$5.5 million. The new management program started in 1994 and has an annual budget of \$250,000 with \$100,000 allocated to the downtown area and the remainder for Town-wide sidewalks. After completion of the Downtown Improvement Program, the entire \$250,000 will be allocated to Town-wide sidewalks. Following the 15-year plan, in 2010, \$150,000 per year will be needed to maintain and reconstruct sidewalks as they become in need of repair.

New Sidewalks

No new sidewalk construction has been incorporated into the current program and would have to become an additional, or separate, program. There are many areas where sidewalks should be incorporated into future site plan developments. These include sections along the Boston Post Road and other streets within commercial zones where small gaps in the existing sidewalks should be filled in. The Town, in cooperation with the State, should explore the possibility of extending the sidewalk system along Hoyt Street (Route 106) and Mansfield Avenue (Route 124).

The identified gaps in existing sidewalk systems are as follows:

Boston Post Road

- in the Noroton area from St. Luke's Church to Old King's Highway South.
- in front of the commercial properties of the now vacant Planter's Barn/Koons' parcel and Chuck's Steak House.
- in the DB-1 zone in front of Sanford Electric and the Congregational Church to connect existing sidewalks.

- in the DB-2 zone, sections are needed between the Convalescent Center and in front of Villager Pond Condominiums, the Paint Spot, the Amoco gas station and the fabric store.
- in the Service Business East zone, a connection between the new walk at the Mobil station to the new car wash/lube facility. Also in front of the IHOP and the Carvel and from Red Lobster to Bertucci's.

Old King's Highway North

- extend the sidewalk from the Boston Post Road to Pellitier Alarm Services, then west from the Fuji restaurant to Darien Close. Also extend the sidewalk in front of the Goodwives Shopping Center.

Tokeneke Road

- from the former "Exxon Chemical" building at 9 Old King's Highway South to the entrance to the Dinner Theater. Also extending from the deli under the Turnpike bridge to connect with the sidewalk at Zotos.

Ledge Road

- the area adjacent to Post 53 for volunteers and commuters. Construction or improvement also along the entire length of Ledge Road.

Leroy Avenue

- from front of Darien Library to Old Stone Road.

Heights Road

- both sides of Heights Road from Noroton Avenue westerly to connect with existing walks. Front of garage at Edgerton Street.

Hoyt Street

- extension north of Lynn Court to at least Woodway Road and possibly to Talmadge Hill Road.

Mansfield Avenue

- extension from Royle School area to Ox Ridge School. Increasing traffic volumes and speeds on Route 124 necessitate sidewalks.

Sedgwick Avenue

- between Mansfield Avenue and Boston Post Road.

Storm Drainage

Needed improvements in the Town's storm water drainage systems require careful study and implementation as part of this Town Plan. Many of the existing storm drainage facilities have not been constructed to accommodate current requirements. Interim steps such as smaller improvement projects and regulations specifying "zero increase in runoff" for subdivisions and new commercial applications have been implemented over the past two decades. However, major improvements in the Town system may yet be required as current problems increase and new problems arise.

Management planning for storm drainage at the federal and state levels of government is favoring more natural treatment such as ground water recharge and more effective use of wetlands areas. With natural ways to improve the quality of storm water runoff being pursued, it becomes even more vital that effective environmental protection measures, such as wetlands protection be pursued.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

More than two thirds of Darien's land area has sanitary sewer service available. This includes most parcels in the R-1 and smaller zoning districts, except the Tokeneke area which is too expensive to sewer due to the presence of significant rock outcrops.

The sewer system is maintained by the Darien Sewer Commission and is funded by a separate user charge applied to those properties using the system. Currently there are 4200 sewer connections out of a possible 4600. Twelve pump stations are maintained and all are regarded as adequate. The collection system of sewer mains ranges from 8" to 24" in size. Most of the original mains, installed between 1938 through 1972, have been rehabilitated either by replacement or re-lining. The remaining sections will be done as necessary with the prime objective being to eliminate as much infiltration as possible.

Darien's sewage is pumped to Stamford at five locations along the Noroton River and via a main line across Holly Pond. The current contractual agreement with Stamford permits Darien to pump an average daily wastewater flow of not more than three million gallons per day and a combined instantaneous peak wastewater flow of not more than 7.5 million gallons per day. The flow limits are divided proportionately among the six crossover locations. Unfortunately, substantially increased flows are experienced during heavy rains. This is due both to stormwater infiltration of sewer mains and cellar drains which have been hooked up illegally to the sanitary sewers. Infiltration problems are being corrected on a priority basis as the Commission's budget permits. Even with the problems existing during storms, which add volume to the daily sewage flows that Stamford accepts, it is not anticipated that the contractual flow limits will be exceeded.

A proposal to extend the sewer service along Hoyt Street to Barringer Road is currently being implemented and will include an additional pumping station. Other extensions have been, and will continue to be allowed adjacent to sewered areas where groundwater conditions are questionable and health concerns associated with failing septic systems exist.

Areas being considered include Circle Road, Davis Lane, Five Mile River Road, Harbor Road, Little Brook Road, Musket Lane, Nickerson Lane, upper Raymond Street, Red Rose Circle, Rings End Road, Swifts Lane, and Tulip Tree Lane. Over the long-term, serious consideration, despite the initial cost, should be given to sewerage most of Tokeneke and other coastal areas in close proximity to Long Island Sound.

Water Supply

The supply of water in adequate amounts and at required pressure to the Town is another important issue facing Darien in the immediate future. The 6,139 water customers in Darien are supplied by the Connecticut American Water Company, located in Greenwich. Until recently, the Company was attempting to meet average Town demands of approximately 2.3 million gallons per day. Peak demands in recent years have increased significantly and on occasion have exceeded 5 million gallons per day and estimated demand at peak hours is tentatively projected at 8 million gallons per day. Much of this tremendous growth is attributed to the expanding use of automated lawn sprinkler systems. Keeping up with this growing demand will be a technical challenge, expensive and will require major distribution improvements.

Darien's water supply comes from both the Connecticut American Water Company's own sources and water purchased by the Company from three additional water suppliers. Connecticut American's own sources include the Rewak Well on the Noroton River aquifer north of Lake Drive in Darien and several reservoirs all of which have limited if any potential for expansion. The Rewak Well, which currently provides approximately 240,000 gallons per day has the potential for some expansion. The Bridgeport Hydraulic System, the Norwalk Second Taxing District and the Stamford Water Company are the three outside suppliers. The amount of water provided by each of these sources varies according to overall quantity of water available, capability of the distribution system, total demand, and cost considerations. In the recent past, Darien has had to impose water use restrictions because of inadequate water supply to its distribution system. A positive step was taken recently by the Water Company to better assure adequate supply. This involved the installation of a new 16" supply line from the Bridgeport Hydraulic regional pipeline located in Hoyt Street near the Parkway to the storage tank on Tower Drive. This is designed to assist in alleviating supply and pressure problems in the northerly part of Town immediately and is an initial step in establishing an improved supply system for the future.

In addition to supply concerns, Darien is also confronted with problems in water distribution. The existing distribution system does not deliver adequate water volumes at proper pressures to all locations throughout the Town. Increased pipe sizes, more loop connections and other considerations are also needed. It has been known for some time now that a new pumping facility is needed at the Town's primary distribution point on Chestnut Street. The new pumping facility is needed to fully utilize the supply in the storage tanks servicing the lower elevations (low-gradient) in Town and to maintain water levels in the Tower Drive storage tank which serves the higher elevations (high-gradient) of the Town. The new supply line should significantly improve this situation. In the past, water service to the higher elevations has been totally interrupted due to the lack of adequate pumping capacity. Not only was this an inconvenience for these water users, but it was a very serious public safety issue as well.

Improvements to the existing pumping station at Chestnut Street continue to be pursued by the Water Company.

Actions to address all these water supply problems must continue to be high on the Town's planning agenda. Fortunately, opportunities exist to deal with these concerns. These include increased access to the Bridgeport Hydraulic supplies and expanded use of the Rewak Well. The Chestnut Street pumping facilities must be expanded and modernized and improvements must be made in the Town's overall distribution system. The Town government must assume a more aggressive posture on these water issues in order to get these needs met. Solutions are available but, as with many needed actions in this Plan, costs will be considerable. Water conservation measures and appropriate procedures to be followed in times of emergency should be part of a comprehensive response to the Town's water problems.

Other Community Facilities

Teen Center: The Depot is the teen center for Darien High School students and is located in the renovated 100 year old former Noroton Heights Train Station. It opened in 1990 and provides a safe, supervised, drug-free and alcohol-free environment where students can gather, socialize and participate in community activities. The Depot is governed by students and is open six days a week. The Depot was expanded in 1993 by incorporating a caboose into the facility and continues to enjoy strong community support. Safe Rides now bases its operations in The Depot.

Day Care: The popular day care program operated by the YWCA at the former Holmes School building on Hoyt Street has been closed because of the reopening of Holmes School. Consequently, alternative appropriate facilities are required to provide for the 250 to 300 children served by these programs. Recent efforts to establish an alternative facility have not been successful for various reasons.

Meeting space: Many smaller groups in the range of 20 to 40 persons experience great difficulty in securing meeting space. These groups would include such organizations as the Council of School Parents, SCORE, the Audubon Club, the Stamp Club and the IBM PC Users Club. These requirements are compounded by the fact that many of the potential facilities for such meetings are in residential zones, such as a church operating under a Special Permit which regulates non-related uses, and for legitimate reasons may restrict the intensity of permitted activities. These needs will be reflected in the various analyses in this Plan.

Summary of Recommendations for Future Public Facilities and Utilities

1. The Town should acquire, as appropriate, certain key parcels of land. Among these would be:

- The entire 2 1/2 acre parcel east of, and adjacent to the Darien Police Station. This property is the only feasible manner to expand the headquarters or its facilities and would offer a realistic option for a new headquarters building.

- The vacant 15 acre parcel east of Hoyt Street and north of Wakemore Street known as the Procaccini property for either recreational or future educational uses. This parcel is one of the few, large unimproved properties in Town and the Town should have some reserve of unimproved land against future needs. If such action is not taken, Darien may face less desirable alternatives such as purchasing improved properties at much higher costs. Should private recreational land become available, this might prove to be the only feasible alternative.

- The privately owned commuter parking lot at Leroy and West Avenues known as the Koons property, to be preserved as commuter parking or incorporated into a new Town Transportation Center.

- The property east of the Ox Ridge Elementary School to expand recreational facilities and improve access and parking facilities at the school.

- The parcel immediately north of, and adjacent to, Middlesex Middle School to expand playing fields and extend more flexibility for the incorporation of the Hollow Tree site.

- The parcel surrounded by Holmes School for parking and recreational purposes and increased use flexibility.

- The parcel to the east of the Refuse Disposal Center which is currently a contractors yard. Again, this is the best option to expand the size of the site.

In addition, if opportunities arise, the Town should be prepared to act on the possible acquisition of:

- The Ox Ridge Hunt Club
- Any Coon Point Road parcels providing access to Long Island Sound

2. The Darien Library Association should acquire

or explore a shared use of the parcel immediately north of its property, known as the Red Cross property. This is the only practical opportunity the Library has to expand its already overtaxed facilities.

3. Pending decisions to be made on the School Expansion Program, the Town should continue its efforts to establish a much needed community center which may include facilities for a Senior Center and Day Care.
4. Detailed Solid Waste/Town Refuse Center Master Plan needs to be finalized.
5. Transportation Center plans need to be developed.
6. Comprehensive Town management programs should be established for:
 - a) downtown municipal parking
 - b) sidewalk construction and maintenance
 - c) street tree maintenance and improvement
 - d) storm drainage improvements

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Darien has been developed over the years as a result of hundreds of individual and group decisions - decisions by builders to subdivide land and build houses; decisions by Town officials to create new public facilities and buy properties; decisions by individuals to buy houses; decisions by businesses to build or lease commercial facilities. Whether or not all of these decisions, made separately and over a long period of time, ultimately add up to a convenient, attractive and desirable community depends on how well they are related to each other in terms of implementing a comprehensive plan designed to achieve such favorable results.

Implementation of the Town Plan as presented herein, and as modified from time to time, will require the cooperative action of the many people and agencies involved in this decision-making. All interests, whether public or private, have a stake in the attractive, economical and orderly development of this Town.

Adoption of the Town Plan

The Plan, once adopted, does not in and of itself change any zoning regulations or assure the carrying out of any of its proposals. It sets forth the recommendations of the Planning and Zoning Commission for the development of the Town and is designed to be a guide that will assist all public agencies and private individuals and groups in making proper decisions related to orderly Town growth.

Meaningful action must be taken by the Town to ensure that the Plan's provisions are substantially implemented. Unless the Plan is used continuously as a reference for decisions on land use, zoning and construction, and other public actions, it will not be carried out as intended. There are many methods for achieving this implementation, a number of which have already been described in previous sections of this Plan. Some others which are more broadly based and have a general impact on future Town development are discussed below. It should be noted, however, that Darien's track record on effectively implementing its prior Plans is quite good.

Continuing Planning

Planning is not a static, one time process. It requires continuing professional input and policy re-evaluation by the Commission on a regular basis and especially continuing efforts to identify and resolve important issues.

The Town should continue to support and strengthen a professionally capable and adequately staffed Town Planning Department. At the same time, the Commission itself must continually be concerned with both the day-to-day decision making which influences the specifics of this Plan and the need to continually re-evaluate the Plan's long range objectives as development patterns and changes take shape. At a minimum, a major re-examination of

the entire Town Plan should, in the future, take place no less than once in each decade, sooner if necessitated by changes in basic assumptions underlying the Plan.

Zoning

One of the most effective ways to assure that Darien is developed as planned is through its zoning. Zoning regulations control the way in which land is used. While they cannot require that land be developed for uses proposed in the plan, they can prevent land from being developed contrary to the Plan. Concurrent with this Plan update, the Commission will be undertaking some amendments to the Zoning Regulations, where it has found that they will be in the best long range interests of the Town.

Darien first adopted Zoning Regulations in 1926 when the Town's population was approximately 5,500. The bulk of the Town's development has taken place since that time and it is important to emphasize that the Town owes its present fine development and quality to those regulations, and to the many public-spirited citizens who have contributed their time and energies to making them operate.

Following the development of this, the third Town Plan, a comprehensive updating of the Zoning Regulations is planned to ensure that its provisions are clarified and modernized in accordance with the Town's development objectives and policies, as established in the Plan. By closely relating these two documents, both become more purposeful and effective. Zoning Regulations then serve as a major instrument in carrying out the recommendations of the Plan, and the Plan acts as a firm overall foundation on which to base the specific provisions of the Regulations.

The above does not mean that Darien's Zoning Regulations cannot or should not be changed in the future. On the contrary, zoning can be expected to change, as it has in the past, to meet changing objectives of the Town and its residents. However, such changes should never be made unless they are in accordance with the Town Plan. If there are situations or policy changes which create the need to amend the Plan, the related portions of the Plan should be restudied and changed in the same careful and thorough way as they were in the preparation of this Plan.

If zoning is to continue to be a valuable means of maintaining Darien as a highly desirable community, the Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Zoning Enforcement Officer, the Building Official, the Environmental Protection Commission, and the Architectural Review Board must continue to maintain and improve an effective relationship with one another, so that the integrity of the Town Plan is maintained. The Commission should follow its regulations fully. From time to time, some unreasonable hardship on a property owner which is unique to his land may justify the Zoning Board of Appeals granting a variance but even this should be done sparingly.

The integrity and enforcement of the zoning regulations, as they have been established by the Commission, must be paramount. The Zoning Enforcement Officer must have the strong support of all Town officials in order for this vital aspect of the program to be effective.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision Regulations are another important tool to control the proper development of the Town. While zoning regulates the use of land, the Subdivision Regulations guide the layout and design of new roads and lots, and ensure that all common improvements are properly accomplished. Subdivision review by the Planning and Zoning Commission makes it possible to continue Darien's long history of well planned development.

The subdivision process also offers the opportunity for implementing some of the Town's open space and recreation objectives. As a part of the approval procedure, the Planning and Zoning Commission requires a developer to set aside a minimum of 10 percent of the land for open space purposes in many of the larger subdivisions which it processes and requires that appropriate measures be taken to protect environmentally sensitive land.

Capital Improvements Program

The ways and the places in which Darien spends money for public improvements - schools, parks, recreation facilities, open space, roads, sidewalks, and municipal buildings - and the design standards to which they are built have a major effect upon the development of the Town. Since the authority to initiate and carry out these improvements is widely distributed throughout many agencies of Town government, it is important that the various recommendations for action by these agencies be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission so that they will conform to the overall plan for Town development.

Darien has had a Capital Improvement Program for many years. This results in careful scheduling and implementation of various public works and public land acquisitions that are needed over a period of years as the Town continues to develop and change. Each year the program is restudied and revised in light of changes in priorities required by changing conditions, and extended another year into the future.

Such a program provides a continuously up-to-date picture of estimated future development needs and costs facing the Town. It helps to give greater stability to the tax rate by spreading improvement costs systematically over a period of years in closer accord with the Town's financial ability, and thus avoids the grouping of several expensive projects in one year with a consequent jump in the tax rate.

Private Development

The vast majority of development in Darien has been and will continue to be carried out by private individuals and organizations. Therefore, it is private action that is the most important element in developing the community, guided and regulated by the Town as described above.

Neither the Town Plan, zoning or subdivision regulations, nor the Town agencies which administer these regulations, can force any private individual or agency to develop a particular piece of land for a particular use. However, the Plan provides an orderly framework for private development and related municipal service facilities and, therefore, can be helpful to private enterprises in determining the right type of development and the

proper place for it. Where there is a good Town Plan, and it is followed on a continuing basis, private enterprise has a more reliable foundation upon which to plan and build. This not only encourages good development, but also helps to accomplish the Plan's specific recommendations.

Priority of Plan Implementation

In general, the most important aspect of the various proposals in the Plan, from the standpoint of priority of action, is the acquisition of land needed for future public purposes. The reason is that if it is not reserved now, it simply may not be available when it is needed in the future. Of course, it will also be necessary to give priority to physical improvements which are urgently needed at the current time.

Intelligent implementation of the Plan recommendations requires that appropriate priorities be assigned and followed. Certain kinds of improvements will have to be carried out on a continuing basis.

Based upon this general concept, the following listing and priority groupings for plan implementation are suggested, from the standpoint of the Town Plan of Development. The priority groups have specific projects such as "Streets and Traffic Circulation," "Open Space and Recreation," and "Public Facilities" listed in the body. It should also be noted at this point that the order of listing of any specific projects within any priority group is not necessarily related to the relative importance of that particular improvement. The priorities simply rank projects in relation to the accomplishment of the Town Plan's goals and policies for Darien.

PRIORITY GROUP ONE

Amend Darien Planning and Zoning Regulations to:

1. Establish more explicit standards and comprehensive procedures for non-residential uses allowed by special permit in residential areas.
2. Provide increased flexibility for the establishment of eating establishments in the Central Business District.
3. Establish additional front and rear building lines and plan for the expansion of municipal parking facilities in the downtown area.
4. Provide increased flexibility relative to the occupancy of Executive and Administrative Offices in the Designed Office and Research Zones.

Streets and Traffic

1. As opportunities permit, cooperate with the State Department of Transportation in making necessary improvements to the intersections of:
 - Interchange #13 and Boston Post Road

- Boston Post Road and Brookside Road
- 2. Encourage Town improvement of intersections at:
 - Brookside Road and Old King's Highway North
 - Noroton and West Avenues
 - Mansfield Avenue and Sedgwick Avenue
 - Mansfield Avenue at McLaren Road
 - Mansfield Avenue at Ox Ridge Elementary School
 - Mansfield Avenue at Stephen Mather Road
 - Hoyt Street at Middlesex and Christie Hill Road.
- 3. Provide new sidewalks on both sides of Heights Road westerly of its intersection with Noroton Avenue.
- 4. Continually improve the management system for the downtown municipal parking system.
- 5. Accelerate the program to repair and replace existing sidewalks.

Open Space and Recreation

- 1. Acquire the Procaccini parcel.
- 2. Acquire the two vacant lots adjacent to the southwesterly corner of Woodland Park.
- 3. Acquire additional recreation and open space to the extent to which it becomes available.
- 4. Complete the Park and Recreation master plan for the Town's open space and recreation system.
- 5. Permanently dedicate Cherry Lawn Park.
- 6. Expand the playing fields at:
 - Baker Park
 - McGuane Field
 - Casey Field at Cherry Lawn Park.

7. Install the lighting system at Tilley Park.

Environment

1. Obtain professionally-trained environmental technician to assist the Town's Environmental Protection Commission.
2. Complete the dredging and repair of tidal gates at Holly Pond.

Community Appearance

1. Strongly support the completion of the program developed by the Task Force on Downtown Improvements regarding renovation of the streetscape in the Central Business District.
2. Complete and implement the proposed Town Street Tree Program.

Public Facilities and Utilities

1. Acquire the property adjacent to the northerly property boundary of the Middlesex Middle School.
2. Acquire the 15 acre Procaccini parcel off Camp Avenue for either educational or recreational purposes.
3. Acquire one or more parcels adjacent to the Ox Ridge Elementary School.
4. Acquire the following sites which essentially represent the only viable options to assuring the proper functioning of certain key Town facilities:
 - the entire property to the east of the Police Headquarters site.
 - the property adjacent to the northerly boundary of the Darien Library site for its expansion.
 - the contractor's site adjacent to the Town Refuse Center.
 - The Koon's property at the intersection of Leroy and West Avenues in order to preserve commuter parking near the Darien Train Station and to facilitate the establishment of the Darien Transportation Center.
5. Continue to work with the Connecticut American Water Company to improve and upgrade the Town's water supply system.
6. Resolve long-term location of the Darien Senior Center.

7. Prepare long range master plan for the Refuse Center.
8. Work with private interests and other public agencies to establish a Community Center.

PRIORITY GROUP TWO

Streets and Traffic

1. Continue to work with the Department of Transportation on the closing of Interchange #12 and the potential for merging Interchanges #10 and #11.
2. Expand the existing municipal parking facilities between Center Street and Corbin Drive.
3. Establish a new municipal parking facility within the area bounded by the Office, Corbin Drive and the Boston Post Road.
4. Eliminate the perpendicular parking from Margo Moore to Fairbanks along the Boston Post Road.
5. Establish additional municipal parking in the business block between the Playhouse and the commuter parking at the Darien Train Station.
6. Eliminate all perpendicular parking along Heights Road.
7. Redesign and rebuild the ingress/egress drive to the parking area at Heights Road and Hollow Tree Ridge Road to improve traffic circulation.
8. As opportunities allow, implement the intersection improvements set forth in the Traffic and Transportation Chapter.

Open Space and Recreation

1. Acquire or otherwise ensure the preservation of Fish Islands.
2. Acquire or relocate the residence on Short Lane to expand Weed Beach and explore incorporation of existing sewer pumping station into the recreational complex.
3. Acquire parcels to provide public access to Holly Pond and Sergeants Cove.
4. Establish parklet at corner of Tokeneke Road and Old King's Highway South.
5. Re-establish and improve the Town bikeway system.
6. Plan for open space greenbelts along Five Mile and Noroton Rivers.

Environment

1. Prepare and adopt aquifer protection regulations.
2. Prepare and adopt enhanced watercourse protection regulations.
3. Implement a sedimentation prevention and monitoring program.
4. Develop a program for the reclamation of the Tokeneke Trail marsh.
5. Identify and remediate non-point sources of pollution entering Long Island Sound. Establish monitoring stations on the Five Mile and Noroton Rivers.

Community Appearance

1. Continue to pursue options for utility lines to be placed underground in commercial districts.

Public Facilities and Utilities

1. Establish the Darien Transportation Center.
2. Acquire the two lots at the corner of Boston Post Road and Renshaw Road for off-street parking for adjacent recreational uses.
3. Complete evaluation of needed storm drainage improvements.

THE PROCESS OF PLANNING

The visual image of Darien has been created through thousands of private and public development decisions. The beauty and attractiveness of the Town owes its success to the overall framework for development which is provided not only through formal planning documents such as this one, but through the care and attention paid to each planning decision by the local officials who enact public planning policies. The quality of the physical and residential environments, and the efficient provision of facilities and services can be preserved through the use of this plan as a guide; and the characteristics that have drawn many to Darien can be maintained, enhanced, and cherished.